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An Evaluation Of Selected Interventions To Raise Participation At University Within The UK Widening Participation Policy Context

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AN EVALUATION OF SELECTED INTERVENTIONS TO RAISE PARTICIPATION AT UNIVERSITY WITHIN THE UK WIDENING PARTICIPATION POLICY CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The higher education system has undergone considerable change in the past fifty years. Increasing the number of students enrolled in university has been a focus of these changes. Despite the governments' attempts in reducing the social class gap, there exist very large differences in those applying for r higher education. It seems despite the large socio-economic gap and the elitist image of attending university, UK government policies have not provided suitable support to reduce this gap. The level of concern over this subject has varied across different governments which could possibly have effects on young people's transition from school across the different social classes. This thesis will address the difference between the New Labour and the Coalition governments' level of attention to the issue of working class under-representation in universities and the policies they have developed to tackle it. It then investigates the effects of selected schemes designed to widen participation and explains how and why they are assumed to contribute to the reduction of the class gap in higher education participation. This study uses the dataset Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) to explore the relationship between attending widening access schemes and the likelihood of attending university during the New Labour office term. In doing so, and due to the shortage of direct measurements of state-funded widening participation programs, the analysis in this research uses school engagement activities as proxies. Additionally to provide an intergenerational comparison, given the differences in both data and policy environment, this research analyses the British Cohort Study 1970 data in order to provide further insights regarding the effectiveness of the then school engagement activities on university attendance. In other words, can the activities used to widen participation then provide greater insight into the kinds of programmes that might be effective in raising working class university participation? In turn this analysis provides the basis for an in-depth policy discussion of the issue.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The higher education (HE) system has undergone considerable changes in the past fifty years. Increasing the number of students enrolled in university has been a focus of these changes. However, whether this increase in the number of students applying for a degree has been proportionate across different social classes has been a major research focus. The representation of the most disadvantaged pupils in HE has changed from 25 percent in 1998/9 to 33 percent in 2014/15 (HESA 2015). Despite successive governments' attempts to reduce the class gap, policies have not provided suitable support and, hence, a very large difference exists across the groups. The level of different government in offices' concern over this issue has varied. This will be explained in more detail later in this chapter, but first, I address some of the hypotheses for the causes of this gap.

Many researchers have attempted to explain this gap. According to Ball et al. (2002), HE choice takes place within two domains of sense and action. One is "cognitive/ performative" that relates to student academic performance. The other is "social/cultural" that relates to social categorisations and is rooted in the background from which people come. The views and choices of potential HE applicants are constructed within a complex interaction of social elements (Ball et al 2002). Some see performance as a function of social factors such as motivation and effort (Reay et al. 2001). Following Ball et al. (2002), there are social scientists who argue school academic performance is one of the key predictors of HE participation (Hutchings and Archer 2001; Savage and Egerton 1997; Gorard 2008; Tight 2012). Tight (2012) recognises that the gap in university attendance is largely explained by the generally poorer school qualifications achieved by pupils from less affluent backgrounds. Other studies have also identified a strong link between university participation and school performance. Bekhradnia (2003) demonstrated that socio-economic differences in HE attendance were a function of attainment at school. According to this literature, therefore, attainment is a determinant of HE attendance (Chowdry et al. 2012). There is also parallel evidence that young people perform differently at school across various social classes (Gorard 2008).

Interestingly, Goldthorpe (2007) follows the footsteps of Boudon and pays attention to primary and secondary effects of class on school achievement. Jackson et al. (2007) elaborate further on the two effects. Primary effects of social class cause attainment differences among young people from different social backgrounds. Secondary effects result from choices and decisions made by students

and their families and maybe teachers and peers. The latter means that students from lower class backgrounds are less likely to be educationally ambitious when compared with students from more privileged backgrounds, even when their grades would make going to university a viable option. This conclusion raises major theoretical and policy issues which will be discussed later.

In addition to the notion of secondary effects of class, many social scientists believe that aspiration and ambition are also influential in young people's decision to go to university. Many have been given an elitist image of university and an impression that HE is heavily biased towards people from advantaged backgrounds (Milburn Review 2012). Hence, many students think that university is not for them. Croll and Attwood (2013) provide evidence of this anticipatory element of aspiration. They show also that young people from family backgrounds of manual occupations are less likely to convert their aspiration to attendance compared with those from professional and managerial home backgrounds. Young people are more likely to achieve encouraging outcomes when they develop ambitious, achievable aspirations combined with access to information and inspiration that they need to achieve their ends (Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force 2008). The report by the Cabinet Office (2008) found that age, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status are among variables of education aspiration which is a multi-aspect construct. They discuss the complexity of aspiration and its relationship with attainment. They believe aspirations and attitudes are developed by young people's interaction with their immediate surrounding and wider-society elements such as economy, technology, media and innovations. The combination of these factors influence young people's decisions and choices which, in turn, affect outcomes. It is evident, too, in the work of Chowdry et al. (2010) and Goodman and Gregg (2010) that education aspirations and expectations are contributors to the perpetuity of the attainment gap. However, they believe that attitudes and aspiration can be influenced and changed, which is an important signal for policy makers and practitioners. Consequently, it can be argued that aspiration could potentially affect young people's decisions whether to attend university. Decisions can be influenced directly, i.e. those who are inspired and expected to go to university are more likely in fact to attend HE, and/or indirectly through influence of aspiration on attainment (Chowdry et al. 2010).

Through the argument above, two of the most important factors in young people's decision-making process are identified; namely attainment and aspiration. Now it is crucial to understand from a social science perspective how these factors are shaped and affected so a solution to influence them positively and appropriately can be found.

Many researchers consider that the concept of aspiration, from a theoretical perspective, stems from a wider structural context. For example, Archer (2007) argues that a lack of aspiration is not an

individual deficit where people are pathologised as the cause of inequality. She argues that the causes for patterns of unequal participation in HE should not be dissociated from more general patterns of inequality in education. This potentially opens up the 'structure versus agency' argument. Those who believe young people are rational investors who choose their pathways to future thinking logically with no attachments to their backgrounds are those who believe attending university is the most rational option after school. They believe individuals are the only decision makers and no socio-economic factor is going to take that away from them. These social scientists, for instance Beck (1992) and Furlong and Cartmel (2006) argue that having high aspiration, and performing well at school are choices and students are aware of the risks of not attending university. Therefore, they would choose to pursue higher education once the returns of graduating from university are understood. On the other hand, there are sociologists who believe aspiration is beyond an individual's choice and is a function of various factors. For example, Bourdieu (1997) famously introduces the concepts of cultural capital and habitus (the combination of norms, attitudes, expectations, culture and other traits dominant in the society). These connect strongly the level of aspiration, expectations and ambition for future occupations with many socio-economic backgrounds, including class; neighbourhood; and other structural factors. From Bourdieu's perspective, the education systems in industrialised countries such as the UK operate in a way as to reproduce and legitimise class inequalities. Given the current policy discourses, success in the education system is enabled by the "possession of cultural capital and of higher-class habitus" (Goldthorpe 2010). This implies that, since pupils from lower social classes do not generally have this habitus, their failure is foreseeable, which consequently explains class inequalities in educational achievement (Sullivan 2002). However, there are qualifications to make to this point, see for example, Kupfer (2015). In general, though this links the level of aspiration and ambition to access to cultural capital since young people who do not have the higher-class habitus probably do not feel they belong to a place like university, an elite institution for more advantaged people; this influences their education expectations and aspiration as they believe university is perhaps not for them. For Bourdieu cultural capital is a catalyst of educational success and could translate into staying in education after school and going to university (Sullivan 2002; Goldthorpe 2010). There are also academics, for instance, Coleman (1988), who believe it is the combination of structure and agency that determine young people's destination,. The idea of simply relating young people's decision to attend university to social and cultural factors is as unrealistic as thinking that individuals are entirely in charge of their lives with no attachments to the cultural and social capital they inherited from their community and families. It, is after all, a modern society in which we live, and the number of opportunities and pathways available to young people are far wider than a generation ago. Students can choose to be inspired or perform well at school (Beck 1992), however

the outcome may be relatively different across different social and cultural classes. This view appears to acknowledge that individuals are not entirely programmed according to their socio-economic status and are able to act on their future social status, however background factors clearly play a large role in informing choices (Breen and Goldthorpe 1999).

As discussed previously, social scientists also have different stances on academic ability as a building block to HE attendance. For example, Saunders (1996:1997) argues that IQ and effort is what is needed to be successful and perform well academically. In summary, he concurs with the meritocracy thesis, that whether an individual is 'bright' and 'works hard' primarily influences where they situate themselves within the class structure. In comparison, class origins and other social factors are of trivial importance. Since Britain has is recognised as "to a large extent, a meritocratic society", unjustifiable inequities related to class do not exist (Saunders 1996:1997). In his critique, and according to social scientists', socio-economic factors are influential in how students perform at school. One approach, looked into above, was the affecting of aspiration. Goodman and Gregg (2010) showed that those who are less inspired to go to university underperform at school. In their exploration of the existing gap in attainment, Dearden et al. (2010) found that more than 50 percent of attainment is explained by prior cognitive abilities which, itself, is a function of social background. They evidenced that there is a large difference in cognitive development across social classes and that this widens by age 5. They also shed light on the importance of the home learning environment in early ages and how it varies from less advantaged families to privileged ones. Additionally, Gregg and Washbrook (2010) showed, that 15 percent of the variation in attainment at age 11 could be explained by family backgrounds and social factors. Therefore, we cannot assume intelligence and effort are the sole explanatory variables of high educational performance. Yet, since the significance of cognitive ability cannot be dismissed, this supports the previous argument for the interrelation of agency and structure.

These theoretical challenges could have differing policy implications depending on the political party in power. Governments could incline towards either end of the structure-agency spectrum, which, in turn, would affect their education policy and spending regime. Assuming political leaders believe that increasing participation in HE is the best tactic of enhancing social mobility, the outcome could depend on a number of things. Firstly, there is the validity of their assumption that young people are rational decision makers and by understanding the returns of pursuing tertiary education they choose to go to university and benefit from what the graduate labour market has to offer. Lauder et al. (2012) and Britton et al. (2016) imply this is debatable. Secondly, do they acknowledge the existence of structural factors which need to be overcome if students from non-traditional backgrounds are to go to university and feel the need to address them? In a third scenario, government would recognise the interconnectedness of structure and agency. They could then invest intelligently in policies that aim

to facilitate the transformation individual choice and cultural and social deficiencies into higher rates of HE participation.

In the recent past, the UK has seen a change from the New Labour government to a Conservative led Coalition government and finally now a Conservative government. The education system has changed dramatically as a consequence. The Coalition Government that was elected in May 2010 aimed to 'close' the achievement gap. This was more ambitious than the New Labour agenda to 'narrow' that gap. Considering that the UK does not stand in a strong position in terms of 'equity' measures within international achievement surveys like PISA, this may seem an unachievable outcome (Whitty and Anders 2014). However, there are countries with similar socio-economic and cultural environments that have managed to narrow the attainment gap and improve the social mobility (Sutton Trust, 2011). As a result, British politician can be more hopeful of social policies that can make a difference in the various achievement gaps that have existed over the years. In fact, surprisingly, the OECD analysis of PISA data implies also that 'cross-national differences in inequalities of performance are associated more closely with the characteristics of the education system than with underlying social inequalities or measures of economic development' (OECD, 2010). This infers that education policy can make a difference to existing inequalities. Indeed, this has been observed in the diminishing of the female and ethnic minority participation rate over the years (Green, 2011).

It does appear that the recent policies narrowed their focus on school achievements by concentrating on promotion of the importance of GCSE [1] results. Current policies also emphasise making improvements through school autonomy, competition and choice as pioneered by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government (Whitty and Andres 2014). The Conservative-led Coalition policy to increase numbers of academies and free schools, in particular in deprived neighbourhoods, as a tool to tackle the underrepresentation gap did not envisage that these institutions would be disproportionately located in middle-class areas where there is already a surplus of places (see Gorard 2010). These observations imply that the Coalition government based their educational policy on assumptions of the efficacy of educational institutions and individual agency with little attention to the structural constraints.

One could draw a conclusion that the New Labour leaders had a better understanding of the structural limitations of choice. 'High quality education for the many rather than excellence for the few' was New Labour's slogan after the 1997 election. This was reflected immediately by the abolition of the Thatcher government's publicly funded schemes (such as Assisted Places Schemes[2]), which originally

[1] General Certificate of Secondary Education

[2] These were scholarships to enable academically-able children from poor families to attend elite private schools. Though targeted at working class children failed by inner-city comprehensive schools, the scheme was actually dominated by

targeted pupils from working class backgrounds and subsequently became dominated by middle-class students (Whitty and Power 2000). New Labour invested in a number of local and national educational initiatives concerned with how best to close the class gap. Local schemes included Education Action Zones, Excellence in Cities and the London Challenge. National initiatives comprised National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy; improving school leadership development; increasing teaching quality; putting together a network of specialist schools; founding academy schools focused on poor neighbourhoods outside the local authority system; and the 'personalisation' of education through 'individually targeted interventions'. Additionally, there was the Every Child Matters programme, a multi-faceted policy that addressed a wider 'children's agenda' (Whitty and Andres 2014). It is apparent that New Labour seemed to understand the importance of wider structural and cultural factors in its broader policies. Hence, it is extraordinary that many of New Labour's key education policies were based on the principle that 'quality differences between schools are primarily the responsibility of schools themselves and can therefore be tackled by initiatives at the school level' (Thrupp and Lupton 2006). This actually puts the New Labour government closer to the institutional level end of policy making which makes it similar to the Conservative position.

Another explanation of the current participation gap could be the ever-changing education system during these years. New Labour held institutional factors close to the core of their spending as discussed by Thrupp and Lupton (2006). On the other hand, the Coalition's policy was not as focused on such factors; their policies were founded partly on opportunities presented by modern society regardless of an individual's background.

Recently, we have seen the introduction of new higher tuition fees at universities, the transfer of power from the central state to HE institutions and a cap on high achieving student recruitment. These have led to a fear that young people's decision to pursue higher education might be deterred, particularly when students are from 'non-traditional' backgrounds. The importance of formation of aspiration and factors affecting attainment at school, and the assumption that these elements could be influenced through carefully selected education policies and initiatives have been discussed previously. As such, mechanisms that can aid student transition and promote student success are going to become ever more vital in the HE landscape, and particularly important for young people from families with less expectation of university education (Andrews and Clark 2011).

The Coalition government cut education spending (Chowdry and Sibieta 2011), particularly in higher education. Coupled with their policy to transfer more authority to universities and schools, funding of

middle-class families who would have sent their children to good suburban schools but whose income was low enough to qualify for the scheme (Edwards *et al*. 1989).

programmes aiming to increase participation rates, especially in deprived areas, became very limited. This is despite the fact that the current government has, through the White Paper, emphasised the amount universities can charge for their widening participation plans. They have axed the funding for the Aimhigher programme that New Labour designed to develop relationships between HE institutions and schools in order to inspire young people from less privileged families to pursue full-time education after school. New Labour identified channels which could overcome, to some extent, the social stratification of HE participation. These include providing young people who lack aspiration, self-esteem and attainment with appropriate tools without which the pursuit of HE seemed unachievable. These aimed to deliver trusted useful information about pathways to HE, as well as the social and cultural capital otherwise inaccessible to young people from less affluent families. Students would attend activities in which they would interact with people able to help them understand their potential. This exposure to the world beyond school could broaden students' horizons in terms of the endless opportunities available after graduation from school. Consequently, aspiration, self-efficacy and eventually their attainment while at school may be raised. The programmes designed by New Labour included mentoring, summer classes, HE visits and career talks. These interventions aimed to help students acquire aspirations for HE and perform better at school, which could potentially translate into a higher proportion of under-represented groups in university. This would be through partial compensation for the lack of access to cultural and social capital among disadvantaged pupils who would think HE is not for them. Thus, the Coalition's controversial abolition of Aimhigher-type of activities, as the result of recent budget cuts and empowering schools to strategise their widening participation plans could, hypothetically, have the opposite effect. Despite lack of data which enables researchers to evaluate the importance of the engagement activities promoted by the New Labour government, there is data available to evaluate the impact of school-mediated engagement programs arranged for students including work experience, career talks, mentoring and work place visits. From this research's perspective, it is reasonable to assume that the school mediated engagement activities could be used a proxy for widening participation programmes Students who attended these activities are then compared against their peers who did not participate in terms of their ambitions to pursue higher education. In the following sections it is explained which dataset is used to measure the effects and through what research methods.

2 RESEARCH TOPIC

After the introduction of the new HE funding system and the education budget cuts, there was a lack of evidence as to the effects of these policy on young people aspirations and participation in higher

education of the working classes. The question being addressed is whether previous attempts to raise aspirations and university participation were effective by evaluating the available data. This research investigates whether governments should, in fact, invest in or promote types of activities mentioned above. It is too soon to judge the influence of the recent policies. However, if this research can find evidence that the schemes mentioned above could have positive impact on participation rate, then one could argue that policies abandoned recently which emphasised the role of engagement activities were actually beneficial.

Evidence exists about positive financial or non-monetary outcomes of holding a degree (for instance, Bynner & Egerton 2001, Sianesi et al. 2003, Feinstein 2002, Universities UK 2007). However, the recent wave of economic studies question the reliability and relevance of previous findings and believe the current economic environment entails more careful pathway selection and consideration of emerging labour market structures by young people (for instance Brown et al. 2011). Therefore, university participation becomes an important policy focus that needs to be evidence-based and supported by research. Consequently, the research questions formed to address this debate are as follows:

1. Did selected interventions at school used as a proxy for widening participation activities help to raise the educational ambition and achievement of disadvantaged students, particularly in leading them to apply to university?
2. In the light of the findings related to (1), what are the likely effects of dropping these programmes by the state?

3 HOW THIS RESEARCH APPROACHES THE QUESTIONS RAISED

To address the research questions above the analysis of longitudinal data is recognised to be the most suitable technique. To test effects of the activities selected as proxies of widening participation programmes during the New Labour time in office, there is only one longitudinal dataset which allows a study of these issues: The Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE). Although this is not a birth cohort which allows measurement of cognitive abilities, it does ask the right questions about socio-economic factors. By screening the questions asked of cohort members, it was discovered that the students were not asked about their experiences of widening participation activities explicitly. However, they have responded separately to questions on activities they have undertaken while at school, including whether they had access to mentoring, career talks and work experience. In the absence of specific longitudinal data, this research uses these activities as proxy for widening

participation activities, as it assumes these interventions similarly aim to familiarise students with the world outside school and broaden their horizons. Their goals, too, are to increase pupils' awareness of the possibilities that higher education offers and that, with the right tools, they can achieve their aspirations. Based on that assumption, and with access to individuals' social and economic status and that of their families, a quantitative analysis is undertaken to test the potential association between the variables of interest using regression methods.

In addition to LSYPE, an extra analysis is conducted using another comprehensive dataset but for one generation before. The British Cohort Study 1970 (BCS70) is a birth cohort that follows members from birth all the way to adulthood. It provides an opportunity to check the findings of the LSYPE analysis and validate them under a different policy and economic environment. In particular, it enables testing of whether any form of intervention can change the aspirations of working class students. It is, therefore, seeking a robust finding for such interventions, because in principle, independent of a specific historical context.

The thesis has a number of chapters. Chapter two will undertake a theoretical discussion of the framework which will guide understanding of the analysis and results in this thesis using a discussion of agency and structure. Chapter three gives a history of higher education policies in the UK to provide a better understanding of the approach of governments to the structure-agency question. Additionally, the existing literature about aspiration and attainment is addressed. Chapter four is about methods and techniques applied in this research to address the research questions. In Chapters five and six, the result of the analysis as well as the justification of the findings are presented and discussed. Finally, Chapter Seven, draws the thesis together.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Analysis

This chapter is designed to provide an analysis of the theoretical frameworks which is related to the understanding of the interventions examined in this study. There are different theoretical perspectives on this question and these are discussed below. They will be used to interpret the data analysis in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. This chapter is followed by another where the history of the policy developments with respect to UK higher education and widening participation is reviewed. A dominant theme that transcends these policy developments is the persistence in social

class inequality with respect to university participation. It therefore forms the basis for the concern to improve student aspirations and education expectations while they are at school.

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental theoretical problems identified in the literature is that between a macro view of society which is dominated by social structures which comprise power relations, particularly in terms of social class, gender and ethnicity and micro approaches which take into account individuals' perceptions of their social world and the choices and decisions they make, given their perceptions. Social structures have been typically associated with forms of determinism in which social class becomes destiny for the majority in terms of their life chances. In contrast, micro approaches have emphasised individual agency: the difficulty has come in reconciling these different approaches. However, if we are to understand how structures such as social class can be addressed and mitigated through policy, then we also need to understand how students respond both to structures and to policies. In this respect the largest obstacle to the integration of macro and micro perceptions has been dominant conceptions of structure and agency. Among structuralists Bourdieu is often seen as a key proponent. Many researchers such as Halsey et al. (1980) and Goldthorpe et al. (1987) have been dominant in the interpretation of his work in England, because they interpret Bourdieu as arguing that there is very little possibility of upward social mobility due to the class structure. In this case the view would be that social class structures determine students' origins and destinations. While, more recently, commentators have rejected the view that Bourdieu is a structuralist in the way assumed by Halsey and Goldthorpe and their colleagues (see e.g. Reay, 2004; Kupfer, 2015), nevertheless the spectre of structuralism remains. However, in this research Bourdieu's work is studied in a more nuanced way, consistent with the position taken by Reay (2004).

At the other extreme is the view that agents have the freedom to choose as they so please. It can be argued that recent debates have centred on whether, as some have suggested, that social structures such as class have loosened their grip on student choice (Beck 1992). Beck's theory is slightly modified by Furlong where he acknowledges the existence of social structures and does not disregard social class (Furlong and Cartmel 1997).

Theoretically, the work of Giddens (1984) is also relevant in this context because he can be interpreted as arguing that through critical reflection (reflexivity) individuals can steer a life course away from the influence of structures. A more extreme version of this account has been developed by Beck (1992).

Alongside Giddens and Beck, the following review also draws on Coleman's account of social capital, which, while not an account that utilises reference to structures, nevertheless provides a way of showing how families and schools can change aspirations and education expectations. The following review highlights theoretical positions related to these authors in light of the key questions addressed in this work.

The next sub-sections outline what different theorists have to say about the agency and structure individually. This then allows the research to discuss what position is taken to further justify the analysis using the theoretical framework developed by Karen Evans (2002). Evans's (2002) work argues that there are additional dimensions to the structure-agency spectrum. This research, based on Evans's conceptual schema, argues that it is not either structure or agency that determines young people's pathway to adulthood, but it is a combination of two.

1.1 BECK

Ulrich Beck's theory of individualism first came out in the UK over twenty years ago (Beck, 1992) suggesting that there has been a foundational movement in the structure of the society allowing for a major change in life chances. He explains how traditionally people's lives were based on social structures where the relationships were considered important. Social structures and social groups controlled individuals' choices and their identities. Consequently, individuals had little control over their choices and opportunities were limited by social background factors. Social class played a chief role in individuals' lives; there exist shared values, interests and needs whilst a sense of community remained within groups. According to this viewpoint, agents are forced by the mechanisms of modern societies to control their lives instead of class, culture, gender and family factors (Atkinson 2007). In Beck's work the idea of social class has died or as he put it 'became a zombie category'. Beck has attempted to place a theoretical framework where he suggests that western societies entered a second phase of modernity called 'reflexive' modernisation i.e. the process of modernisation itself is sabotaging the foundation of western societies through its side-effects and radical new social forms (Becks 1992; 1997; Giddens and Beck 1994; Beck and Lau 2005). The two aspects of this development are 'the changing logic of distribution from wealth to risks; the product of technological movements and more importantly the dissolution of large-group categories such as class as the consequence of individualisation of social inequalities generated by the welfare state' (Beck 1992; Giddens and Beck 1994). Beck argues that when it turns to the exposure to the hazards of expanding production and techno-scientific progressions, class position is no longer a problem; positioning in relation to the new global risks is rather of importance and it is these that

people need to deal with. Beck stresses that in this process the logic of class does not work anymore. According to him even the wealthiest and most powerful are caught in this environmental and risk storm. Therefore, political movements are going to cut across the class division and dissolve the old limitations and unite as the victims of the risk; he believes risk societies are not class societies (Beck 1992). He also argues that individuals, in the wake of 'reflexive modernity', are separated from the traditional social forms and commitments including class and re-embedded in new forms of lives in which they should 'produce, stage and cobble together their biographies themselves' (Beck 1992; 1997). He considers individuals as actors, designers and directors of their lives, biographies, networks and commitments (Beck 1997). Particularly, he specifies the impact of the developing education system, which 'recasts and displaces' traditional forms of living and norms with a universal form of knowledge and language (Beck 2002, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). This new format forces people towards a more self-reflective knowledge and uses individuals' performance as the foundation. The increased level of competition and expectation of mobility inevitably enforces the agents to take control of their lives and devalues the impact of community and the support network it provides.

The result, Beck argues, is that constraints and determination of class no longer exists and gives way to individual agency, choice and decisions at different points in life (Beck and Willms 2004). People are, in modern society, to construct their own biographies and identities from various options they front and overwhelmingly navigate their way through the society. According to Beck, inequality and poverty cannot be seen, in the context of reflexive modernity, as differentially distributed between groups, as they were in the pre-modern societies, but between 'phases in the average working life' (Beck 1997; Beck and Willms 2004). According to this viewpoint, people join and leave economically tight groups for different (non-class) reasons and at various stages. As a result, they can hardly count for a specific class with a static position who inherited previous generation position; rather, they occupy 'precarious, ambivalent positions that are subject to cancellation in a structure conceived not in terms of locations but in terms of movement' (Beck 2002, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002).

However, sociologists have labelled this theory 'data free', empirically devoid and without any consideration of the social world (Marshall 1997; Goldthorpe 2002; Skeggs 2004; Brannen and Nilsen 2005). Even a quick glance at some statistics shows the continued influence of class on income, access to health and well being, access to consumption goods and education. This research will demonstrate the continued influence of social class.

Beck's theoretical framework does modify this research conceptualisation of class and its consequences to some extent: it is important to investigate the correlation between socio-economic factors and willingness to attend university but it is also important not to disregard the agency element

entirely. The complication of the new labour market entails individuals to choose their paths through the society and build their unique profile in order to succeed in the intense competition among young people. The way economies in most developed countries are developing according to the most recently highly regarded economist Piketty (2014), the rate of return on wealth is higher than the rate of wage growth which means the rich young people can move limitlessly from gap year to internship to a job at father's bank/ministry/TV network – while the disadvantaged put on their uniforms at the local coffee place.

1.2 FURLONG

Furlong's research interest revolves around the experience of young people in education and their transition to the labour market. His work has impacted on educational research over the past two decades. He argues that young people's lives have been under considerable change owing to the relationships they hold with their friends and family, experiences they have within the labour market, the education they receive about the labour market, the leisure and lifestyles they choose, which in general has an influence on their capacities in becoming young adults. In these respects his work touches on many of the themes raised by Beck (1992) but he is not so radical in his view of the consequences of recent social changes in relation to the impact of social class.

From his perspective, young individuals are exposed to certain risks that did not exist a generation ago (Furlong and Cartmel 2006). These movements in lifestyles are regardless of socio-economic backgrounds and gender which made considerable changes to the social reproduction system because the points of reference have been demolished; therefore there is less aid available to individuals. However, Furlong believes, that although the structures may have become fragmented and their formats changed, life chances and opportunities are still available, taking one's position within the social structure into account. He argues that class and gender remain important when analysing an individual's life chances but it is also crucial to note that these factors are becoming indeterminate when 'collectivist traditions' lose power to individual values. Furlong exemplifies this using the transport system where he simulates life chances in 1960s and 1970s to a train journey. He describes young people as the passengers on a train with a certain direction and destination; the train they board varies according to their socio-economic backgrounds, gender and education. When the journey starts they have limited opportunities to change the destination, they can upgrade their ticket or step off at a station in the middle of the trip but the fact that trains have set paths means there are few chances to change the direction. As the consequence of this journey you have the companionship of other passengers on the train, with sharing goals and experiences and individuals start developing

harmonies with their fellow passengers. They learn to act as a group and if a change of train was required it would appear as a collective decision; this implies that individuality was not typical to young people's lives in that era. However this has not been the case over the past twenty or thirty years; young people increasingly prefer to travel by car. The drivers are able to choose their own path among hundreds of various routes whereas trains would travel on set tracks, they can also control various factors such as the speed and comfort of the journey. What Furlong believes is not commonly taken into consideration with sociological analyses is the type of car assigned to individuals: those with low quality cars will take long time off the road while individuals with superior cars will be more advantaged in this regard (Furlong and Cartmel 1997; 2006).

Furlong explains that young people are exposed to new risks and chances and these stem from the loss of the traditional associations between family, friends, school and work which forces individuals to embark on the adulthood journey although they are uncertain about the outcomes. He suggests that young people have come to experience unique and individualised pathways and they think the risks they face are to be coped with through individual, rather than collective, actions.

Furlong (2006) also argues that individuals benefit from arrays of possibilities brought to them through the establishment of self-identities in the contexts that weren't specifically available to their parents. For instance, he compares the age of leaving home in order to build a life and marriage a decade ago by working class individuals, but with the current rate of increase in post-secondary education, the life experiences between working and middle class kids has become similar. Furlong and Cartmel (2006) suggest that there is inadequate evidence to diminish the impact of social class on life chances even though young people are experiencing a more individualised world. It appears that Furlong is in disagreement with Beck where he takes into account the influential role of class, gender, race and other structural factors on one hand; however, on the other hand, he suggests these factors are less likely to determine the outcome solely, in a process that individuals are more open to construct their own lives even the most disadvantaged. Furlong's theoretical background is also in line with what this research desires to evidence, can people from lower socio-economic backgrounds change the direction of their journey if they are given the chance to know the road to the future better and clearer and how, if not by existing cultures and family norms, would they be able to accomplish that?

1.3 GIDDENS

Giddens (1984) developed a comprehensive elaboration of Structuration Theory in his 1984 work *The Constitution of Society*. The core of structuration theory reconceptualises the traditional notions of

structure and agency as two separate poles. Shilling (1992) in his description of Giddens contribution to the sociology of education says that social structures from Gidden's perspective are not impersonal forces, which are completely constraining; but they are rather reproduced and implicated by individuals interacting with each other through time and space in their daily lives (Shiling 1992). This takes us away from the traditional dualism of structure and agency, reformed as the 'duality of structure': structure is both the medium and outcome of social intercourse (Giddens 1979; 1981; 1984). In his reconceptualisation of traditional definitions of structure, Giddens places human agents at the heart of social reproduction because they have the potential to escape their structural origins through their ability to be critically reflexive of their social situations. However, unless agents are critically reflexive they will simply reproduce existing inequalities. Theoretically then individuals who are critically reflexive have the potential control over their lives through their understanding of their 'social self'.

Giddens recognises the existence of limitations affecting the ways individuals live out the rules of social order. Social expectations, norms and traditions, along with power structures form a boundary to people's actions and reinforce and recreate them or change them. These expectations, in response to social structures can put restrictions on individuals' lives. He also finds 'self identity' a key factor in selecting a lifestyle. 'Self-identity', from his viewpoint, is the perception one has from his/her biography.

Giddens theoretical framework is interesting for this research as he believes social structures do exist including, power relations, norms, traditions and cultures and human agents can alter them or recreate them. This affects how researchers view disadvantage; individuals inherit it perhaps from their parents and this would impact their identities and choices, but knowledgeable individuals with their capabilities and in the right time and space may be able to alter the reproduction of disadvantage (Giddens 1984).

1.4 COLEMAN

James Coleman has had a substantial influence on the study of education. His contribution to this research's understanding of structure and agency is through the concept of social capital. From his perspective, social capital offers valuable insights into questions under discussion in this work (Coleman 1988). In his study of educational achievement in the American ghettos, he was able to evidence that social capital was not simply or always a feature for the upper class, but that the poor could benefit from it's exercise. Social capital, according to Coleman, is defined as a resource which

consists of family relations and other networks that are helpful for social development of a young person (Coleman 1994). Coleman's understanding of social capital is not universally shared. There are two key distinctions: for example, between Coleman and Bourdieu's definition of social capital: a) the difference between resources and capacity to attain them in the social 'field' is clearly expressed by Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1990; Dika and Singh 2002) but it is not understood by Coleman's studies and b) Bourdieu finds social capital as a means of reproduction for the upper class whereas Coleman finds it a means of creating opportunities based on trust and information channels.

Coleman's work was particularly influenced, but not limited, by Becker's work on human capital which utilised the principles of economics to education by applying the framework of rational choice theory (Becker 1964). Rational action theory suggests that people pursue their own interest; therefore social interaction also is seen as a form of exchange (Becker 1964). Coleman broadened his view of the society, from rational action theory; this theory presumes a highly personalised model of human behaviour, each individual does what is in her/his own interest automatically regardless of others belief or fate.

Similar to Bourdieu, Coleman's work is rooted in social inequality and he is interested in academic attainment in schools. In his study of high school students in Chicago (Adolescent Society 1961) he showed that the effect of peer groups in shaping a young person's attitude is more substantial than adults and family members. In another analysis he directed in mid 1960s overseen by the United States Office of Education- described as 'watershed in social science research' and known as 'Coleman Report'- he confirmed that family background and community characteristics have an impact on forming young people's lives, outweighing the influence of the school (Coleman 1966). Following this research, he led several analyses comparing the academic performance in private and public schools. Using information of family background and academic attainment of 50,000 high school students, Coleman reported that pupils at Catholic schools outperform their peers at public schools although factors such as social class and ethnicity were taken into the model (Coleman et al. 1982). A subsequent longitudinal study verified the findings about performance of the students in Catholic schools as well as a lower dropout rate and absenteeism. The result was especially profound to pupils from disadvantaged community where parents make the least contribution to their children's education outcome (Hoffer et al. 1985; Coleman and Hoffer 1987). Coleman argues that this pattern can be explained by the norms and culture existing within communities and he concluded that the social capital could act as compensation to social and economic disadvantage within the family (Coleman and Hoffer 1987).

Coleman later developed his view of social capital in relationship to human capital. His central argument concerned the contribution of social capital to the development of human capital and their interconnection. He believes that the two concepts are complementary rather than competing (Coleman 1994). The rational choice theory questions why individuals choose to generate social capital when they pursue rationally what is in their own interest. However, Coleman provides a solution to this conundrum by eradicating it: individuals do not intend to invest in social capital as such, rather it appears as a result of following their own interest which in a way suggests that social capital arose from calculated and intentional choices made for the purpose of human capital accumulation (Coleman 1994). Therefore, for him social capital is:

> 'defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure.' (Coleman 1994)

In this context, he portrays the family as the most important societal structure, considering his interest in children's cognitive development (Coleman 1990). However, from his perspective, the erosion of the family and other 'primordial organisations' resulted in a transfer of responsibility to other 'constructed organisations' such as schools (Bourdieu and Coleman 1991). Coleman acknowledged that 'primordial forms of organisation' featuring intense levels of closure can no longer generate a fundamental basis for societal actions although he does not completely accept that constructed structures are able to provide the solidarity and closure essential for the development of young people (Field 2003).

Coleman's work addresses the role of socio-economic backgrounds in young people's development and how social capital can potentially partly compensate for economic disadvantage within families. This directly links with the questions designed in this research as it suggests constructed social structures can assist individuals to follow what is best for them instead of being confined by traditions, norms and existing cultures of the communities they are part of. It is also important from this research's viewpoint to accept the complementary role of human and social capital and their interconnectedness which is pinpointed by Coleman's theoretical framework.

1.5 BOURDIEU

For Bourdieu the purpose of social sciences is to unveil the most buried structures across different worlds in addition to the mechanisms that results in reproduction or transformation (Bourdieu 1997). Bourdieu's work on the idea of cultural capital has attracted significant attention from scholars.

Cultural capital presented itself to Bourdieu as a means of explaining different 'scholastic achievements' of children coming from various backgrounds and related performance at school (Bourdieu 1986). He states that cultural capital consists of familiarity with the dominant culture in a society. The possession of cultural capital varies with social class, yet the education system presumes the possession of cultural capital. This makes it very difficult for lower-class pupils to succeed in the education system:

> 'By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the education system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture.' (Bourdieu, 1977a)

He believes that individuals live in certain types of surroundings, which approve certain traditions. For instance, individuals from lower social classes accept that their peers in higher classes were to be considerably more successful in education, they believe in it and consider this as a matter of course. A working class individual, from Bourdieu's viewpoint, did not possess the type of academic capacity essential for successful education outcome, and as the result their aspiration would adapt accordingly; such individuals, he believes, should realise their place within the spectrum and did not expect more than that. Bourdieu labelled this as cultural capital.

According to him, economists were successful in formulating the return on investment in education for individuals but what they fail to consider is the proportion of resources agents of different social classes allocate to investment; because economists forget to relate investment strategies to the entire set of educational strategies and to the system of reproduction. They, by paradox, do not account for the hidden and socially determinant investment named the 'domestic transmission of cultural capital'. Traditionally, according to him, when studying the relationship between academic ability and academic investment economists only refer to the benefits education provides to the society which ignores the contribution of education system to reproduction of social structure by sanctioning the hereditary transmission of cultural capital. He argues that 'scholastic' returns of education depend on the cultural capital previously invested by the family (Bourdieu 1986).

Within the theory of cultural capital, his concept of Habitus has become Bourdieu's most contested idea. Similar to cultural capital, habitus is transmitted within the home. However, whereas cultural capital consists of the possession of legitimate knowledge, habitus is a set of attitudes and values. The concept of Habitus is central to his methodology of structuralist constructivism, which enables him to battle the dualisms of agency-structure. According to him it is through the practice of habitus that

agency is connected to capital and field (structure) (Reay 2004). In his study of Algerian society in 1960s, he explains the concept of 'habitus' a development of organised set of values and ways of thinking which acts as a form of connector between subjective agency and objective position (Field, 2003). Habitus is central to Bourdieu's work because it potentially acts as a hinge between social structures and the individual. But that depends upon how habitus is interpreted. Diane Reay looks at what Bourdieu meant by habitus from four different perspectives critically, including 'habitus and embodiment, habitus and agency, habitus as a compilation of collective and individual trajectories and habitus as a complex interplay between past and present' (Reay 2004). She explains in detail how Bourdieu uses this concept in his sociological research which in fact leads to different criticism among academics. Firstly, Bourdieu believes that not only that the 'body is in the social world but the social world is in the body which refers to the crucial feature of habitus, embodiment, that habitus is not solely composed' (Bourdieu 1977). Secondly, he suggests that habitus can be viewed as a generator of a wide range of possible actions, which enable people to both draw on transformative and limiting courses of action (Bourdieu 1990). Thirdly, it is argued by him that a person's individual history forms habitus but so also does the entire collective history of family and class the individual belongs to; and finally, he believes that habitus refers to something historical and is linked to individual history:

> 'The habitus acquired in the family is at the basis of the structuring of school experiences...;the habitus transformed by the action of the school, itself diversified, is in turn at the basis of all subsequent experiences... and so on, from restructuring to restructuring.' (Bourdieu 1972, cited in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

According to Reay (2004) the range of possibilities inscribed in a habitus could be seen as a continuum: 'at one end, habitus can be replicated through encountering a field that reproduces its dispositions. At the other end of continuum, habitus can be transformed through a process that either raises or lowers an individual's expectations. Implicit in the concept is the possibility of a social trajectory that enables conditions of living that are very different from initial ones.'

Bourdieu's view of social capital was part of a wider study of social order. He believed that the position of an agent in society is reflected by the amount of and weight of their capital as well as their strategy to obtain their goals. According to him, 'social field' is similar to a casino where individuals play games with black chips (economic capital), blue chips (cultural capital) and red ones (social capitals) (Alheit 1996). The types of capital might not be replaceable but a combination of them might act as a new capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). To understand Bourdieu's perspective on social capital, it is crucial to know that his ideas were strongly influenced by Marxist sociology believing that 'economic capital' is the most fundamental of forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986). He was interested in the forms

of combining different capitals and the fact that it is inadequate to view capital merely in economic terms. He argues that it is not possible to make sense of the social world without approving the role of every form of the capital not only those suggested by economic theories (Bourdieu 1986). This led him to posit cultural as well as social capital and this has been the concept most often associated with him.

In his view social capital was the 'sole means' of explaining the 'principle of the social assets' which were observed where

> ‘Different individuals obtain a very unequal return on a more or less equivalent capital (economic or cultural) according to the extent to which there are able to mobilise by proxy the capital of a group (family, old pupils of elite schools, select club, nobility, etc).’ (Bourdieu, 1980)

For him, the solidity and strength of ties were both of importance; social capital stands for an 'aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are associated to possession of a durable network' (Bourdieu 1980). Bourdieu demonstrates the interaction between connections and cultural or financial capital by an example of members of professions such as doctors or lawyers who take advantage of their social capital i.e. respect and honour associated with mutually supportive collective modes of behaviour and public presentation to gain the clientele confidence (Bourdieu 1984). His treatment of the concept of social capital is instrumental which focuses on the advantages to individuals by virtue of participation in groups and the construction of sociability with the purpose of creating resources. Social networks are not given and needs acquirement through investment strategies in order to institutionalise group relationships and use them as a reliable source for other benefits. Bourdieu’s definition of social capital makes it decomposable to social relations itself which allows agents to gain access to resources possessed by others and second, the amount and quality of those resources (Portes 2000). He emphasises on the substitution of forms of capital; this suggests that through social capital actors can gain direct access to economic resources and increase their cultural capital.

The application of social capital, according to Portes (2000), falls into three categories: a) as a means of social control; b) as a source of family support and c) as a source of benefit from non-familial network. Many scholars and social scientists studied the application of social capital, however, by far the most common function of social capital is as a source of network beyond family which comes closest to Bourdieu’s definition (1979, 1980) for whom parental support is attributed to cultural capital; whereas social capital is an asset gained through participation in networks.

There are however criticisms of Bourdieu's theory. As Andrew Sayer (2004) highlights one of the most distinctive features of Bourdieu's framework is the lack of attention to gender, race, age and disability. Although through his theoretical support cultural superiority and inferiority can be studied, McClelland (1990) believes such dispositions are influenced by gender and race in addition to social class. Sayer (2004) also argues that Bourdieu over-emphasises unconscious desires neglecting everyday 'reflexivity'; which Sayer names 'our inner conversation' (see also Archer 2003). Nick Crosly (2000) makes a similar point when he suggests that habitus should include 'dialogues with oneself'. The critiques believe that improving the concept of habitus by including ethical dispositions or moral sentiments allows a richer understanding of an individual's surroundings.

Last but not least, despite the criticism, which invoked structuralism or determinism, some of Bourdieu's work provides more insight into agency than others. As Lois McNay (2001) puts it 'there has been an increasing emphasis in Bourdieu's more recent work on moments of disalignment and tension between habitus and field which may give rise to social change'. Habitus provides a means for concurrently analysing 'the experience of social agents... the objective structures which makes it possible' (Bourdieu 1988). Using habitus as a conceptual tool allows the research focus to be broader than the specific focus under study (Reay 2004). While it is important to view individuals as dynamically engaged in creating their social environment, Bourdieu's technique accentuates ways in which 'the structure of those worlds is already predefined by broader racial, gender and class relations' (Bourdieu and Waquant 1992). Habitus has proved a valuable concept within empirical research. Habitus duality, as both an individualised and collective form, lets social scientists conduct excellent research both qualitatively and quantitatively, moving from individuals to the class and back again (for example Charlesworth 2000; Nash 2002; Reay 1997; Atkins 2000; Dumais 2002). Reay admits in her 2004 paper that the conceptual looseness of habitus represents a potential strength. It makes possible adjustment rather than the more constricting straightforward approval of the concept within empirical work.

2 REFLECTIONS

In the section above there was an illustration of different theories regarding the life chances available to students of this generation, and approached the transition to adulthood from varying perspectives comparing them to the generations before. On one hand there is a group of social scientists suggesting that individuals may be increasingly gaining control of their lives. They argue that it is young people's choices that matter the most and the opportunities available to them did not exist in their parents'

generation; they use these possibilities and choose their lifestyle by taking greater risks and trying new experiences. Young people are not limited, according to their viewpoint, to any factors or pathways and can decide to their future by themselves. On the other end of the spectrum, there is another group of sociologists who, acknowledge that there is a degree of freedom that individuals may have but that, typically, they are bound to particular social groups according to what they have been given at birth, empowering the social reproduction view to exist and permitting societal associations to play a role in the working of the society and channel their members to a very particular end. From their view, there could be little done to change these pathways and society has accepted the facts as a usual aspect of life.

When focusing on issues such as widening access to higher education, this debate becomes relevant to policymakers in the variety of practical schemes to be put in practice. However, rather than seeing this debate in purely theoretical terms we also need to consider empirical evidence. If for example policy interventions work, then that may inform our understanding of these theories.

This study suggests that we should consider the hypothesis that individuals are positioned at different points where a range of where a range of factors govern the degree of agency. The outline provided above was a synopsis to reflect the range of categories of theories in an attempt to explain people's life chances. This will provide the framework for the subsequent empirical analysis.

3 THEORY, RECONSTRUCTED

In order to consider the hypothesis that individuals' socio-environmental background factors affect their destination as well as the extent they reflect on the opportunities presented by the modern this research shall refer to the work of Karen Evans.

In a study built upon Anglo-German and UK research (Bynner and Roberts 1991; Evans and Heinz 1994, Evanz et al. 2000), Karen Evans (2002) presents the results of a survey conducted among 900 18-25 young people regarding the existing approaches to transitions into the labour market. The outcome showed that 18-25 year olds have been challenged in controlling their lives, where the key factors in generating this challenge are based in the wider societal associations as well as to social background and individual surroundings (Evans 2002). Previous research and analysis, Evans argues, has been used to either overstress the role of structural influences or overemphasise the changing world of apparent endless opportunities for young people, allowing them to steer their own lives.

Researchers have never strongly disregarded the impact of social structures such as gender, ethnicity and parental backgrounds on young people's experiences throughout life. This perspective has influenced the majority of the post war theoretical frameworks on the quality of young people lives and the chances they have regarding higher education and employment. However, the notion of agency has emerged more recently when social scientists realised that the social structures do not have an overwhelming influence; this concept shed light on individuals' complex life stories by taking the fact into account that they can react to their surrounding and make decisions as well as experiencing things that could shape their lives (Rudd and Evans 1998). Many recent studies in this field, building on their findings across countries, recognised that there is a need to make changes to the understanding of structural influences and sense of controls held by young individuals as they enter adulthood and other stages:

> 'The evidence in these studies indicates that many in the younger generation are becoming increasingly pro-active in the face of risk and uncertainty of outcomes, and are making pragmatic choices for themselves which enable them to maintain their aspirations despite the persistence of structural influences on their lives. The evidence suggests that the life experience and future prospects of this generation are more complex and less predictable than those of their predecessors, and that consequently the established linear models of transition to adulthood and future careers are increasingly inappropriate... This convergence of evidence from different countries and continents points to a need to re-examine established understandings of 'transitions' and the frameworks, which have been adopted in much youth research in the past.' (Wyn & Dwyer 1999)

Karen Evans (2010) presents a conceptual model for examination of the individualisation in the context of theoretical frameworks that demonstrate agency and structure in various ways. The model has three dimensions, which is beyond the two-end spectrum: structure-agency, internal-external and social reproduction-social conversion. The present study will use this figure to represent the standpoint of each of the theories discussed in this chapter.

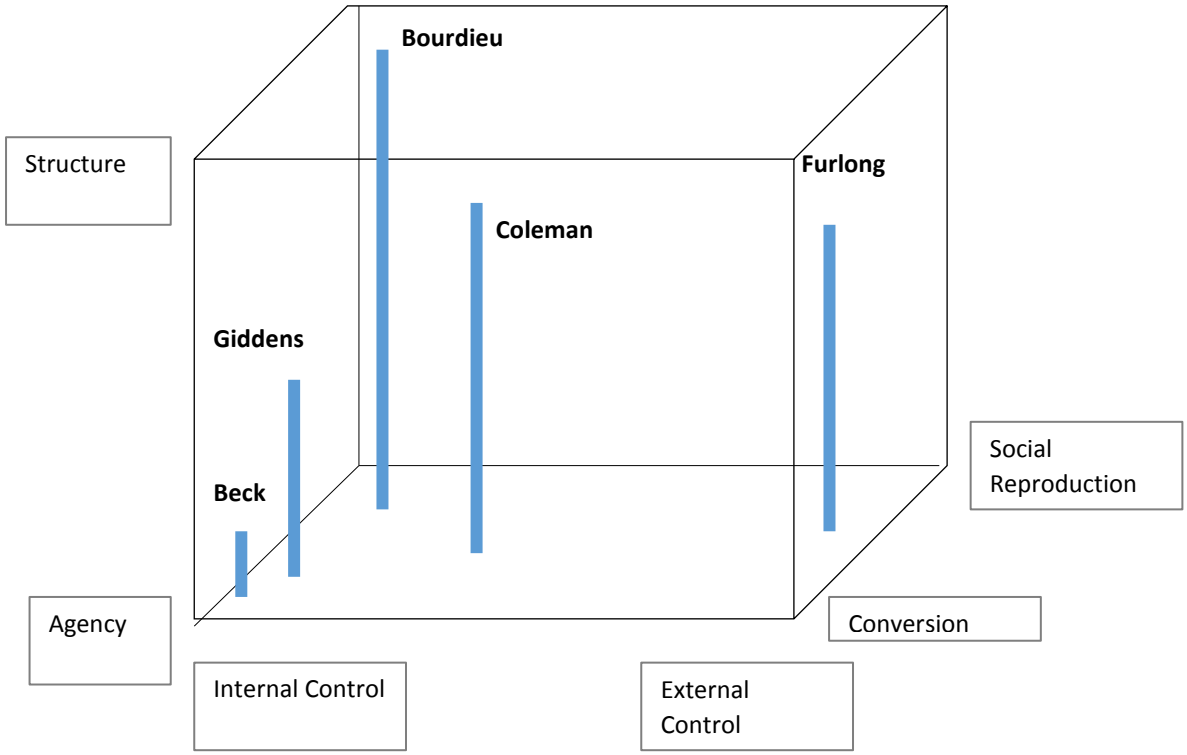

Figure 1. Conceptual schema for structure–agency (Evans 2010)

Dimension one is about individualisation versus social determinism. The emergence of individualism as a school of thought is accredited to a number of German social scientists; Beck was among the first theorists who presented the concept of 'reflexive modernisation' called Risk Society (Beck 1992, 1998). In this conceptualisation, uncertainty and a disintegrated transition to adulthood experienced by young people stems from the risk factors existed in the modern world. Individualisation occurs as the result of suspension of traditional elements of the industrial society including class, gender, ethnicity, culture and social background (Beck 1992). According to this view, individuals are capable of making plans for their lives and taking actions. Beck and Giddens, therefore, are based closer to the agency end since their beliefs are closer to the idea of actively engaged individuals making decisions based on endless opportunities provided in life. However, the formation of individualistic identities stresses the requirement of finding new elements affecting the transition process since the traditional descriptions lost their explanatory power.

Dimension two takes into account the internal versus external factors. There has been research about the topic of 'efficacy' by Bandura, Elder, Flammer (1995) and other social scientists which present an 'acting individual' going through the context of the external environment (Evans 2010). There are some aspects of the environment that can be changed and some are considerably more difficult to

alter. Rothbaum et al. (1982) suggests two forms of control including primary and secondary; primary control is when people attempt to change their surroundings to better align with their aspiration level whereas secondary control is where individuals change their perception and aspiration to fit into their surroundings. When people fail to exercise the primary control they turn to secondary mode of control (Rothbaum 1982). Flammer (1997) believes that there is a steady shift from primary to secondary control to be observed during the course of life. It is also possible that people from various cultural and social backgrounds encounter dissimilar obstacles in the transition to early adulthood; therefore, their pace in shifting from primary to secondary would vary. Evans and Heinz (1994) believe:

> 'The extent to which young people succeed in developing longer-term occupational goals depends not only on their past socialisation in family and school, but also to a large degree on the way their identity formation is linked to challenge, and rewarding experience in the passage to employment itself.'

Individual biographies are associated with structures and societal organisations within a changing environment. They are also connected to cultural capital and traditions and the way these are interrelated with institutional structures. Theorists with a perspective of internal processes of the choice making as well as individualisation are located at the intersection of agency and internal processes. Social scientists who emphasise on the external confinements in making choices are placed at the intersection of structure and external processes (Evans 2010).

Dimension three focuses on the social reproduction model against social conversion investigating the association of social mobility/transformation and how it can be attributed to collective/individual actions. This dimension does refer to, according to the Evans (2010), to rational choice theory is that individuals take actions in a rational way in various situations. However, there have been cases that actions seemed rational from the actors point of view which are potentially subjective; therefore, rational choice theory lose explanatory power when related to objective characteristics of a society. Goldthorpe (1988) has explained the significance of studying the conditions under which individuals take actions, from the social science perspective. He argues that social scientists must focus on the action within a context rather than on the sensibility of people, attempting to illustrate the "social, structural and professional characters of a situation" which makes the person makes choices that are not objectively logical.

> 'It is far more illuminating to investigate empirically, across societies and cultures, those more particular structures and processes—at the level of social networks, group affiliations and

> institutions—by which patterns of action are guided into conformity with specified standards of rationality or are defected from them.' (Goldthorpe 1998)

Furlong & Cartmel's (1997) attention to structural factors, external procedures and social reproduction places the 'epistemological fallacy' argument towards the back right-hand intersection, while Bourdieu's (1993) emphasis on social reproduction is also high but emphasises subjectivities of the acting individual and explores agency in relation to 'habitus' and 'field' (Evans 2010).

In summary, the Karen Evans's illustration of theorists' standpoint can be useful. As mentioned above, the idea of a spectrum which enables a dual categorisation of social scientists in terms of their beliefs regarding agency and structure is not comprehensive, it simply does not capture the full picture and certainly not all individual stories across different social worlds. On the other hand, the interconnectedness of human and social capital and the importance of roles both agency and field plays in determination of young people's lives could potentially be more realistic and unveil the true story. For instance, as Helve and Evans (2013) emphasise the importance of the two types of resources that influence patterns of youth transition which include structural resources and personal/agentic resources. According to where people are coming from and their personal characteristics, they can have a smooth or advantageous transition or become exposed to the risk of fragmented transition.

With respect to the research questions in this thesis it is crucial to see how this framework forms the main argument. On average the transition to adulthood has been extended in the UK over the last sixty years and perhaps will continue to do so, the response to the structural changes linked with technological shift and a global economy is not uniform (Cote and Bynner 2008). For example, while opportunities have developed for the majority to stay on in education, a considerable proportion of individuals continue to take the more traditional route to adulthood, leaving education after finishing school to seek a job in 'unskilled' sector of the labour market (Ashton and Maguire 1983). Such action is to some extent the practice of individual choice associated with increasing reliance on personal resources; but it also reflects the structural stratification in society that continue to affect expectations and the form that the life-course and the transitions within it take (Heinz 1991, Bynner and Roberts 1991, Roberts et al. 1994, Furlong and Cartmel 1997, 2007, Evans and Furlong 1997). Hence, individualisation, as Beck suggests, has not replaced the traditional ways of socialisation in the family, school, and workplace. The new insecurities including risk and uncertainty prompt the expansion of alternative form of reference sources like parents and family members (Cote and Bynner 2008). The increased complexity of choice introduced by risk societies, is also reflected in the expansion of counselling and guidance for young people, such as the 'Connexions' service and 'AimHigher' in the UK targeting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds with the purpose of 'Bridging the Gap'

(Social Exclusion Unit 1999). Thus, the duality of agency and structure is rather incomplete. Structural factors, as mediated by the family and locality, continue to have a major place in the shaping of youth transitions (Bronfenbrenner 1979, Roberts and Parsell 1989, Ashton and Lowe 1991, Roberts et al. 1994) while personal control is yet to be determined. It could partly be concluded from this discussion that a diet of human, social and cultural capital, depending on the individual life stories, could place young people in a rather less tenuous ground and this research is going to test this hypothesis; whether social class, and gender affect the destination of young people; whether qualification, performance at school and personal attributes matters in terms of access to higher education and lastly what role non-familial networks play in determining the transition from school. Karen Evans conceptual framework summarises this debate. It is hypothesised by this research that young people's lives are affected by their socio-economic backgrounds and there are compensational interventions throughout their learning experiences that could provide them with agentic and personal as well as structural resources required for a smooth departure from school.

The aim of this research is to use data to find traces of positive effects of government policy to create channels and networks for people who could rarely access the type of resources. Following Coleman's school of thought this research will test for background factors as well as individual desires to build up the fundament of a successful journey to future lives, using quantitative research methods.

In doing so, this research looks into the factors (agency or structural), which according to the past research could change young people's destination after full time education. As mentioned briefly in the introductory chapter one of the key elements of determining young people's destination after finishing full time education is their level of aspiration (Croll and Attwood 2013; Cabinet office 2008; Goodman and Gregg 2010; Chowdry et al. 2010). In the next section it is explained how the concept of aspiration is interpreted in this work i.e. whether high/low aspiration is considered as an individual choice or it is derived by cultural capital and family backgrounds. Additionally, the difference between educational aspiration and educational expectation is discussed. The position selected by this research is then reflected in the analysis.

4 THE CONCEPT OF ASPIRATION AND EXPECTATIONS

As we have seen, low aspirations are considered as a major barrier to closing educational attainment gaps and increasing social mobility. In the U.K., inequality of educational outcomes has been the bedrock of social and education policy discourse and the past research consistently demonstrates that

socioeconomic status (SES) is strongly correlated with levels of educational achievement, which affects adult social status in turn (Blanden et al. 2011, Ermisch et al. 2012). Variances in educational aspirations have been detected between income and ethnic groups and seem to play an important mediating role in decisions to pursue higher qualifications (Butler and Hamnett 2011, Croll 2009, Francis and Archer 2005, Gutman and Akerman 2008, Kao and Tienda 1998, Strand and Winston 2008, Vaisey 2010). Such trends have formed debates about the necessity to raise the educational outcomes of disadvantaged groups, positively affect social mobility and close performance gaps. However, aspiration is associated with individual agency and structure differently across theorists and social scientists. Within the research literature and public policy documents there are various theories that attempt to explain how students' aspirations are related to social structure or individual agency.

Some researchers adopt an approach with an inclination towards Beck's theory of individualism and reflexive modernisation. For instance, it is expected that the emergence of a knowledge-based economy and the gradual decline in traditional occupations with low skill requirements, will slowly raise young people's aspirations and expectations as recent cohorts are exposed to a progressively higher skilled world of work (Andres et al. 2012). Although this pattern illustrates the changes observed over the course of the last century, they do not describe the last decade which has been characterised by 'economic restructuring and corporate down-sizing, recession, high levels of unemployment, rising rates of part-time and temporary employment' and, generally, a great deal of uncertainty for young people entering the labour market (Brown, Cheung and Lauder, 2015). Therefore, it is far from reality to disregard entirely the effects of social factors and family backgrounds and focus solely on agents in determining their own future; the future is not as appealing and straightforward as it was a generation before.

Alternatively, and in many ways compelling, Bourdieu and those social scientists that adopted the concept of cultural capital and habitus in their research have offered accounts of aspirations. In Bourdieu's approach he suggests that there is a strong association between educational aspirations and social background, since social class controls the educational opportunities available to young people. In a similar vein he later stated that, 'Agents shape their aspirations according to concrete indices of the accessible and the inaccessible, of what is and is not 'for us'...' (Bourdieu 1990). This adaptive preference account again implies a strong link between social constructs such as social class, available opportunities and educational aspirations. Despite the fact that structural effects have changed their forms and become proportionally harder to directly measure in modern society, life chances and outcomes can still largely be predicted using individuals' position within social structures' (Jones and Wallace 1992). Jones & Wallace (1992) claim that social class, family background, academic achievement and opportunities in the local labour market continue to shape post-compulsory school

pathways and aspirations. Numerous recent studies (Goldthorpe & Marshall, 1992; Erikson & Jonsson, 1996; Shavit & Blossfeld, 1996) have shown little evidence of an general trend of expanded life chances resulting from greater equality across social classes. According to Goldthorpe (1996), 'class inequalities ... appear typically to display marked temporal stability, extending over decades'. Heinz (1995) also believes that one's biography is not independent of social structure. Rather, 'opportunities for social mobility and individual timing in the life course still depend on the structure of social inequality'.

Given the complexity of how aspirations are likely to shape decision making, it is still far from established quite how much it matters for educational outcomes and what the 'social mechanisms' are that form it (Hedstrom and Bearman 2011). A concern raised by Gorard et al. (2012) is the challenge of a causal relationship between aspirations and educational outcomes. They also believe that there is little evidence to support the claim that interventions designed to increase the level of aspiration are worthwhile (Gorard et al. 2012). Nevertheless, there exist good reasons to think that aspirations could play at least some role in the educational attainment process considering all the evidence presented in the literature discussed above. In order to navigate through the result of the analysis clearly, this research adopts a reconceptualised account of aspiration where it is believed that aspiration is partially explained by the social structures but still has some element of self-identity and agency in it.

Despite the explanation of how this research positioned itself in the theories behind aspiration and expectation, there is a difference in how these two concepts are defined which ultimately affects the way these two variables are treated later in the analysis. People's perceptions of what is suitable for themselves and for others, including what is expected from them is different from what they are aspired to do in life (Seymour 1999). High aspirations do not always result in high educational achievement and high position in the labour market (Strand, 2007). It has been argued that the problem lies in the difference between aspirations and expectations. Often young people's academic expectations are lower than their aspirations due to some perceptions in the society or perceived barriers (e.g., Gottfredson, 1981; Armstrong & Crombie, 2000). This could consequently result in underachievement and affect self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura et.al. 2001). For instance, just to show the difference between the two concepts, Day (1990) discusses that many women have high aspirations; however, usually they do not expect to be able to have the occupation they would like to, as the roles might be more male-dominated; this phenomenon is mainly justified by stereotypes in the society about gender-related roles and women beliefs of what they possibly can achieve. They both have routes into cultural capital theory in slightly different ways and habitus but there is a difference between the nature of what young people perceive regarding their abilities and what they want to do in future.

In the current study, the two variables are separated and measured differently. According to Reynolds and Pemberton (2001), educational expectations and aspirations has a major difference between what one wishes to obtain and what one genuinely expects to attain. Aspirations are intangible statements or values and beliefs regarding future plans (educational or/and employment plans) formed by young people, i.e. the level a student wishes to get to. According to Marjoribanks (1998), aspirations are expressed as idealistic values that do not necessarily reflect certain socio-economic realities that might affect future mobility. However, Mickelson (1990) believes, expectations are actual values representing the realities faced by students, i.e. how students what they will achieve in reality considering their socio-economic status as well as to their past and current education performance. In this study aspirations is accounted similarly to Gorard et al. (2012) and Khattab (2015) as 'what an individual hopes will happen in the future' in terms of continuing full-time education after the age of 16. This is presented in-depth in the methodology chapter.

In the next chapter, this study examines the range of UK policies regarding widened access to higher education and what they advocate. This gives an insightful picture of governments' views of young people's transitions to adulthood including higher education attendance and the ultimate labour market; it also permit an investigation of whether there is a consistent approach to higher education policies illustrating the perspective of governments on debates concerning structure and agency factors. The study acknowledges that the last few decades have seen considerable change in terms of policy and its resourcing as governments have come and gone.

Chapter 3: Higher Education Policy and Equity

1 INTRODUCTION

Since World War II, the attempt to instil fairness in the educational system has been the bedrock of social and political discourse. It was initially linked to concepts of individual and social mobility, and was subsequently associated with social class or with people from disadvantaged family backgrounds (TLRP 2008). In recent political discourse, equal educational opportunities beyond compulsory schooling has assumed new significance. Over this period, UK governments have endeavoured to extend access to higher education in response to three key policy moments, which have changed the scale and scope of higher education. These time points were the 1960s, the 1980s and the late 90s (Trow 2005).

Economic changes in the UK and the rest of the world have led to the promotion of post-compulsory education, in particular higher education. Debates concerning new funding regimes and mechanisms for this expansion, including money raised by marketisation and student tuition, and through admission of 'non-traditional' students was central to the UK government policy discussions (TLRP 2008). Understanding these changes became challenging in terms of the association of the new movements and economic changes, global and local labour markets, families and communities. The balance between privilege, equality and diversity has remained a dilemma for policy-makers even after so-called education reforms throughout recent years with the aim of improving the system.

The first major change to funding in HE occurred after the Teaching and HE Act in 1998, when tuition fees were introduced for degree programmes for the first time at £1,000. Maintenance grants were reduced considerably and subsequently replaced by maintenance loans in 1999. In 2006, another substantial policy change occurred as a result of the 2004 HE Act. This saw the introduction of deferred fees, significantly higher than before at £3,000, for all students regardless of background. The fees were compensated for by an accompanying fee loan to be repaid after graduation. Maintenance grants, which were reintroduced for the poorest students in 2004, were also significantly increased in 2006 (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) 2010).

The higher education funding system in England has changed again radically since 2010. At a time of substantial change, it is important to map and understand the direct and indirect costs and benefits of the latest funding regime. In addition, these recent changes have wider macro/microeconomic implications as a result the shift from direct to indirect taxpayer funding for higher education. Following the May 2010 general election and the formation of the Conservative-led Coalition Government, which promised to eliminate the budget deficit by 2014/15, a number of changes to the higher education funding regime were projected. These suggestions were voted through Parliament in December 2010 and have been implemented for the 2012/13 cohort of undergraduate students (London Economics 2013). The headline of these changes consists of:

- The removal of teaching funding provided by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) relating to predominantly classroom taught subjects;
- An increase in the maximum tuition fees that higher education institutions are able to charge to £9,000 per annum for full-time undergraduates; subject to an Access Agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA);
- An increase in the scale of tuition fee loans available to cover increased undergraduate tuition fees;
- An increase in the maintenance loans and grants available to eligible full-time undergraduates;
- The introduction of tuition fee loans for eligible part-time undergraduates;
- The introduction of higher tuition fee loans for individuals studying at private institutions;
- Amendments of tuition fee and maintenance loan conditions to incorporate:
  – A positive and variable real interest rate on outstanding loans (dependent on earnings);
  – An extension of the repayment period before debt write-off; and
  – An increase in the nominal earnings threshold before loan repayment commences.

It is important for this research to take into account these changes as it helps to better position the Coalition government's new policies in context of the theoretical framework introduced in previous Chapters. The impacts of the new spending regime on student finance, young people's views of the changes and widening participation agenda and whether they will act as a disincentive to participating in HE are also elucidated.

In the following section, the key policy documents in the UK education history are presented in order to provide a picture of the changes and structures that have shaped HE. This will help to give more context to the hypothesis formed in this research in relation to different policies.

2 UK HIGHER EDUCATION HISTORY

2.1 60S, THE ROBBINS REPORT

The Robbins Committee was selected by Treasury on the 8th February, 1961. Its purpose was to review the pattern of full-time HE in Great Britain and, with an eye to national needs and resources, to advise the then government about long-term development plans. This included advising whether there should be any changes in the expansion pattern of recruitment and whether any new types of institution are desirable. Its remit also covered whether any modifications should be made in the present arrangements for planning and coordinating the development of the different types of institution. The committee's research covered a wide field. The leading feature of the analysis was to focus on major problems in the system. These included changes concerning the financial position of the universities. Despite the fact that some universities had access to independent sources of income, the major financial resources were provided by the state. Additionally, developments had occurred where technical colleges and colleges for the education and training of teachers had risen to university or near university level.

Young people's desire to attend HE had surprisingly increased as the result of the extension of education opportunities at school level, which resulted in more demand for places. At the same time, there was a realisation that economic prosperity depended on the education of young people. From the committee's point of view, UK HE was in need of reform maintaining its position in the future global economic competition was desirable. Britain was compared to many other countries and the results showed that others' HE systems provided wider ranges of opportunities for young people.

Additionally, the committee suggested that HE should be available to all individuals who were qualified by ability and attainment to pursue it, and who desired to do so. It strongly believed that the UK government should have 'subsidised any qualified applicant for HE who would not otherwise have had the income or savings to pay for it'. This was an underlying theme within their report and become known as the Robbins Principle. The committee also referred to previous research, the Crowther Report (1959), which identified a correlation between a parent's level of occupation and the attainment of their children at school. Surveys confirmed that offspring attainment association with

parental occupation was more significant at the HE level. In families of similar professional levels, the percentage of children attending full time HE was four times higher for children from families with one or two children than from those having five or more children. Consequently, a growth in family incomes was likely to raise the demand for HE. Parental educational background was also identified as a major influence. The proportion of individuals in HE from families whose parents attended school until at least 18 was eight times higher than children from families with less education. The aspiration for education, the committee proposed, tended to extend as more parents received further education. Children from working class families were on average much less successful than children of the same ability in other social groups. This was mostly due to the age parents left education.

As a result of the prospects for continued economic growth and rising levels of social mobility, the Robbins Committee, recommended growth in the provision of HE in the UK. The Robbins Report was a support to 'opportunities for all', specifically in challenging HE as the preserve of the elite. They believed in offering opportunities for individuals to participate within the HE market. In a sense, it aimed to make possible the involvement of young people by creating additional opportunities within the sector. Following the expansion of HE participation, the expectation was that individuals would routinely follow through into the system without the need to be provided with encouragement. The report assumed more young people intended to pursue further education regardless of their background because of increased number of opportunities available to everyone and greater returns attached to university attendance, including better labour market outcomes. Thus, in this respect, the Robbins Report was more on the 'agency' end of the spectrum. It followed the then fashionable human capital theory in believing that individuals would realize the merits of entering HE. In a way, the report assumed that individuals are willing and able to manage their lives and are not directed by external factors such as family backgrounds, family social class or parental education background. This is despite addressing societal factors that could affect attainment and aspiration. The widening of access to HE was to be undertaken through further provision and the upgrading of tertiary institutions to University status.

2.1.1 Post-Robbins widening participation

Robbins (1963) recommended the expansion of HE. However, according to Blackburn and Jarman (1993), the development in student numbers was apparent before its publication and Robbins merely 'legitimised an expansion that was already underway' (p. 201).

Probably, more importantly, Robbins debated the expansion to make better use of 'under-utilised ability', especially among those from working class (Trowler 2003; Ross 2003). It therefore

recommended a more 'equitable' system (Hayton and Paczuska 2002). Yet, while there was a substantial growth in HE (Reay et al. 2001), with real growth higher than that estimated by Robbins (Ross, 2003), the social mix of participation remained largely unaffected (Reay et al, 2001; Ross 2003). In 1979, the Conservative government seriously influenced by a 'laissez-faire' ideology and a liking for market solutions came to power. They encouraged 'individual responsibility, choice, self-interest, competition and enterprise' (see Levacic 1993; Pollitt 1993; Atkinson Baker and Milward 1996; Ball 1997; Beynon 1999; Hodgson 1999; Halsey 2000; Loxley and Thomas 2001), and considered consumer choice as the most efficient factor in targeting resources, even for schools and universities.

In the setting created by the Conservatives, any resulting inequalities were interpreted as 'natural', and necessary, for the economy to run successfully (Loxley and Thomas 2001). As a result, government seemed less concerned about the issue of disadvantage and social exclusion (Ross 2003).

2.2 90s, The Dearing Report

According to Barr and Crawford (1997) university expansion rose between the 1960s and the 90s- from 5 percent of an age cohort to a mass 30 percent- but that this had created problems since the funding per student had not increased; leading to economic and political difficulties. The problems identified included: universities had insufficient funds, so that real funding per student fell by 30 percent (CVCP, 1996); students were financially limited with students suffering a significant shortfall in support (Barr and Low, 1988); the top-up loan scheme had design inefficiencies as it was more like a mortgage repayment rather than an income- contingent repayment (Barr, 1989). The policies created by the then government resulted in a debate about whether students should pay up-front fees and whether it should be accompanied by income-contingent loans. In the face of these problems, a National Committee of Inquiry into HE (The Dearing Committee) was appointed in 1996 to determine the funding system deficiencies and report on alternatives to the authorities. The change of government from a Conservative government (which had been in power for over 18 years) to a Labour government meant that there was undeniably a transformation in focus and interpretation to conform to Labour's general election manifesto and policies on HE. These were consistent with Dearing's recommendations. The two core objectives of the report included 1) to improve access by improving student access to financial resource while at university, this implied a loan system, which did not discourage the applicants; additionally, less explicitly, it implied that students' standard of living was sufficient while in education; 2) making more resources available- for reinstating university quality and to finance the actions required to more access. Since it was argued that these resources could not come from the public purse, they would cost too much, they had to come from the private

sector (Barr and Crawford, 1997). The report noted that the aim was to have HE 'gaining in strength through the pursuit of quality and a commitment to standards'. In order to achieve this, the UK needed to develop a 'learning society'. However, it also noted that although participation rates amongst those within the working class had at least doubled between 60's and 90's; they were still underrepresented compared to those attending from higher classes and they believed this was partially because those students from the lower socio- economic groups perform less well at A-Level.

The committee's first proposal to the government, therefore, dealt with the variety of courses and qualifications on offer to students at post-16 level. However this was undertaken within a much wider framework for analysing widening participation. The committee agreed with the Robbins committee that there is a limited 'pool of ability' within the student market. They believed that if opportunities were opened such as those suggested within their research, more students would decide to participate in a greater variety of courses and programmes and so they would attract a greater number of students. The first feature of their investigation was based on the patterns of participation within HE. The committee traced the benefits of HE for those who take part in it, whether it is in higher salaries or higher status employment. Although the participation rates by students from higher socio-economic groups had expanded, this did not have a significant influence on the ratios of total participation. The committee also determined a connection between the region where a student resides and their engagement levels within education; meaning the probability of a young person entering HE institutions (HEI) is strongly linked to the student's immediate surroundings and neighbourhood (which could be used as a measurement of deprivation). The committee conducted data analysis of the percentage of students attending pre/post 1992 universities. They studied the proportion of students from within 'Widening Participation' backgrounds that entered both pre and post 1992 universities. Surprisingly, they reported that there was no inequity by universities in choosing students and that they were 'even- handed' in their actions. The committee was keen to provide some explanations as to the possible differences in the levels of participation across different social groups. It first considered the demand for HE within the context of widening participation. It hypothesised that if demand increased, consequently, participation would broaden as a result (an analysis based on historical data). However, they suggested that the Higher Education Funding Council Provide funding to institutions that had reasonable and measurable strategies for widening participation. It, also, looked at the entrance requisites in terms of pre-university attainment and university requirements. The committee stated that 'the largest single determinant of participation in HE amongst the 18 to 21-year-old cohort is educational achievement at 18'. This therefore suggested that the reasons behind unequal participation by individuals lie outside HE and the committee mentioned some possible causes: individuals' aspirations and attitudes, peer pressure/influence,

family backgrounds, quality of schooling and financial circumstances. They have also recommended solution to enable the government to tackle this issue. For instance, they suggested, with immediate effect that bodies responsible for funding further and higher education to jointly or separately to design projects to address low achievement or low expectations and to endorse higher education attendance (Recommendation 3 of the Dearing Committee).

2.2.1 The Student Financing Revolution

The Dearing Report was considered as a solution to HE funding crisis. The underfunding problem led to a critical time in spending on tertiary education:

> 'We express here our concern that the long-term well being of higher education should not be damaged by the needs of the short term. We are particularly concerned about planned further reductions in the unit of funding for higher education... We believe that this would damage both the quality and effectiveness of higher education.... We therefore recommend that students enter into an obligation to make contributions to the cost of their education once they are in work.' (DfES, 1997)

The Committee estimated that a further £350 million in spending would be required in 1998-99 and an additional £565 million in 1999-2000 and in 20 years additional funding of almost £2 billion. It was argued by the Committee that the funding would be required to cover an expansion in participation, more support for part-time students, ensure sufficient infrastructure for HE, and provide funding for research and maintenance support for students. They also recommended that the government's overall budget for HE should rise. After investigating different solutions for the funding system, tuition and maintenance costs, the report recommends various options; a combination of student tuition fees on a loan basis, and the continuation of means-tested maintenance grants and student loans. To support low-income students, the report proposed that from 1998/99 institutions should be able to cut tuition fees for part-time students in receipt of jobseekers' allowance or certain family benefits. The Inquiry also proposed the establishment of a Student Support Agency to unify all the bodies providing financial support for students. When New Labour came to power in 1997 the education system was suffering in a perceived funding crisis (Bogdanor, 2003). After the Dearing report suggested that a financial contribution would be necessary by students, the government implemented the up-front tuition fees in line with the repayment scheme of a graduate loan. However, the main policy concern of the then government was widening access and believing that increase in fees payable up-front would affect families from low-income background. Therefore, they abolished the up-front payments and introduced the variable fee package (Tuffs, 2003). This would permit HEIs to

charge up to £3000 annually which according to New Labour would compensate the shortage of financial resources for universities and students by deferring payment of fees. According to Wolf (2003) this would offer freer, more versatile and internationally competitive institutions by which Britain could brand itself for high quality education. However, there was opposition; Straw (2003) argues for instance, that the number of students participating in HE had decreased by 5% in the preceding ten years and the factor causing this was debt. At first, he believed that only 7% of 16-18 year olds would receive the support of £1000, the maintenance grant proposed by government (increased to £1500 later on), and with the average living cost of £6200 annually, the package was still not fully. With students confronted with the accumulated debt of approximately £30,000 (Abrams, 2003), deprived students are less likely to apply for HE. Straw believed the fear of debt puts off individuals coming from lower social backgrounds. In spite of this, the government response to these discussions was:

> '...addressing issues of debt is just one way in which participation can be encouraged.' Other steps need to be taken to encourage more young people from poorer backgrounds to go to university. 'The real deterrents lie elsewhere', and are associated with their lack of attainment and aspirations, and ambition to apply to universities...' (DfES, 2003a)

According to Callender and Jackson (2010) debt is a class issue but people have different and complex approaches to it; students from poorer backgrounds have greater fear of debt. In their quantitative analysis they show debt attitude (general debt aversion level and cost/benefit balance judgment) has a significant effect on HE entry even after controlling for background factors; the most debt tolerant individual in their sample was just over five times more likely to apply to university than the most debt averse individual. However, they suggest that one could not consider the debt aversion as the only reason for deterring from HE but there are other factors such as attainment and aspiration playing key roles. For instance, Callender and Jackson (2010) concluded in their paper that those who select vocational routes are less likely to attend university compared to their peers who chose to do academic routes. It also suggests that approaches to debt is attitudinal as people manage complexity differently; for example, they show that debt aversion was an element in prospective students' decisions in choice of university. It was an important factor among low-income students for picking a university where the cost of living were lower; was near their home; and where the prospects of term-time employment were good. It may be that conceptualising attitudes toward debt in a different manner may alter the findings. The argument above is another instance where societal structures such as family income and social class plays a role in young people's transition from school.

The Dearing Report was dissimilar from the Robbins Committee for two reasons. Firstly, the Robbins report was the first major publication for reforming education structures in the UK. Therefore, the Dearing committee had a reference point when addressing various issues in HE despite the fact that the reports were thirty years apart. At the same time, the situation had changed dramatically since the publication of the Robbins report. The education system had expanded, with increased numbers of students participating in secondary education and continuing on to HE.

A key difference, for this thesis, concerns the identification of factors outside universities control in creating unequal participation rates. The Dearing report is in fact the first official publication that studied these external factors. The main concentration in the report is on the external elements of the decision- making process for individuals. Although not completely disregarding the agency factor, the report clearly believes that external causes (peer influences, family backgrounds and quality of schooling) are elements that require to be taken into consideration; the factors that cannot be changed by individuals easily and higher education may be able to improve it partly:

> '…Despite the welcome increase in overall participation, there remain groups in the population who are under-represented in higher education, notably those from socio-economic groups III to V, people with disabilities and specific ethnic minority groups. Many of the causes lie outside higher education itself, although we recognise that higher education can contribute to improving the situation. We believe that the best progress will be made if the funding of expansion is targeted on institutions which can demonstrate a commitment to widening participation in the recent past, and have a robust strategy for doing so in the future.' (Dearing Report 1997).

For the first time in an official report structural factors are identified as contributing to inequality in participation rates. In addition, it indicated that attention must be paid to the social reproduction issue where individuals may find themselves confined to what's given to them by parents or choose to reflect the opportunities and experiences that their parents have themselves undergone. But Dearing also moved the debate on from having a focus solely on the need to change and expand the sector (with the Robbins Report) to reflecting on the student population and its needs and views on HE (the Dearing Report) (Devincenzi, 2011).

There are several critiques of the Dearing Report and its proposals, mostly about student finances. HE during the 1990s, as mentioned above, was experiencing a huge development in terms of the expansion in universities and the student population. Despite this growth, funding per student decreased, and there was no sign that additional capital would be brought into the system. Hence, the Committee dedicated a focus of the report to the issue of financing. These issues are related to the

concept of widening access. Widening participation in HE is about the need to create a suitable atmosphere in which all students, specifically those coming from non-traditional families, are able to stay in education. Barr and Crawford (1998) investigated the funding proposals and believed that the proposals were flawed. Their point of view was: firstly, the funding proposal would not generate any additional income for either HEIs or students – students and universities would remain poor; and secondly, they argued that the issues of widening access would not be dealt with through the proposed changes. No additional resources would become available to HEIs in order to compete with the international education providers. Barr and Crawford also concentrated on student needs and support in the government's bid to widening access schemes to HE. They believed that the Dearing Report recommendations for students who needed support were not helpful. Their first criticism was regarding the proposed loans for students. They argued that the loans were too small and would not allow students to have sufficient living standards whilst in education. They estimated that loans would provide a shortfall of nearly 20% relative to the amount that would be needed to fund both the actual courses and for general living arrangements (Barr and Crawford, 1998). They believed that the shortfall would impose parental support, which according to them is a regressive education policy because it then makes student participation dependent on family resources. This could act reversely to what The Dearing committee had in mind in terms of widening access. It is arguable whether this type of policy performs as a driver to widen access to HE from lower socio-economic background groups.

2.2.2 Widening Participation under the Dearing recommendations

The main part of Dearing's recommendations relating to widening participation are based on the idea that students from lower social classes are failing to access university due to poor school performance, low aspiration levels and weak decision-making (Greenbank 2006). It was felt that universities had a role to play in raising aspiration levels and decision-making. Dearing, however, concentrated on the early stage of the 'student life cycle', e.g. aspiration raising and admissions. It largely overlooked the students' experience of HE and their transition into employment. The lack of concern with later stages in the student life cycle was possibly influenced by Report 6 to the Dearing Inquiry (Robertson and Hillman, 1997), which represented findings from two different reports stating that once admitted in university, working-class students performed equally as great as their middle-class peers. Yet, Robertson and Hillman (1997) were also concerned that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds 'end up at the lower end of the labour market and are twice as likely to enjoy low starting salaries as any other group'.

On the other hand, a frequent theme in the Dearing Report is its ratification of more collaborative approaches. For example, it presented instances of higher education institutions (HEIs) and school collaboration to raise working class awareness of the advantages of higher education and to increase their aspirations. The report also provided examples of 'compact' agreements between universities and colleges that guaranteed places to local students who meet minimum entry requirements (see Dearing Report, 1997, pp. 107–108). Dearing emphasised the need for institutions to devise a widening participation strategy and mechanisms for observing and reviewing progress on attendance rate (Dearing Report, 1997, Recommendation 2, p. 107). Therefore, Dearing was encouraging a 'strategic planning approach' (Mintzberg, et al. 1998) to widening participation, including the development of evidence-based strategic plans and targets. For instance, the Dearing Report (1997) proposed that HEIs should

'Devise a clear policy about its strategic aims for participation, with particular reference to those groups who are known to be under-represented; and that it should monitor admissions and participation against those aims' (para. 7.22, p. 107)

The Dearing Report (1997) was a key document in the evolution of New Labour and HEFCE's policy on widening participation.

2.3 2003, THE NEW LABOUR WHITE PAPER: *THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION*

The White Paper was released during mid-January 2003 and many believe it is a 'follow on' from the Dearing report, providing the details and infrastructure to implement the various suggestions made by National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE). The White Paper indicates the impact and contribution that HE offers within society. It establishes the link between HE and economic prosperity and the social well being of the nation. The report explains the crucial function of HE to equip 'the labour force with appropriate and relevant skills' and to develop the quality of life. HE 'powers the economy, and its graduates are crucial to the public services'. More importantly, the government states that 'wide access to HE makes for a more enlightened and socially just society'. The paper has a different perspective when studying widening participation. The term Widening Participation defined as 'access', the new way to respond to issues concerning widening participation schemes. The paper looks to these issues as it acknowledges that there is still social class gap amongst HE participants, and describes this as 'unacceptably wide'. The gap has extended and young people from professional backgrounds are over five times more likely to enter HE than those from backgrounds without a tradition of HE participation. It states that 'this state of affairs cannot be

tolerated in a civilised society. It wastes our national talent; and it is inherently socially unjust' (The Future of Higher Education 2003)

The paper attempts to reflect the purpose of HE. The main argument is regarding HE participation and financial gains. It states that, 'Graduates and those who have "sub-degree" qualifications earn, on average, around 50 per cent more than non-graduates. Graduates are unlikely to be unemployed, and as a group, they have enjoyed double the number of job promotions over the last five years, compared to non-graduates' (BIS 2003). However, the paper also evidences the social benefits of HE participation, as it believes that graduates are generally more engaged citizens. The then government set a target of increasing participation by 50%, and the paper stated that since the general employability and financial stability achieved by graduates are a social good, it is crucial to encourage and continuously promote the target. They also explained the means by which this target is to be met. Their plan includes promoting high quality experience at HEIs where the skills demanded by employers are met as well as those of students. The paper argues that the UK economy requires work-focused courses i.e. those that develop students' job-related skills.

The issue of widening access is foregrounded in the report. The government's aims are clearly set out within its first paragraph:

> 'Education must be a force for opportunity and social justice, not for the entrenchment of privilege. We must make certain that the opportunities that HE brings are available to all those who have the potential to benefit from them, regardless of their background. This is not just about preventing active discrimination; it is about working actively to make sure that potential is recognised and fostered wherever it is found.' (BIS 2003)

The Paper understands that widening access cannot be accomplished easily and believes that it depends on building '*aspirations* and *attainment*' throughout all the stages of education. As Nicholas Barr (2003) discusses in his analysis of the White Paper, from those with good performance in A-levels, 90 percent go to universities regardless of their social background. For that reason, the majority of the disparity in HE happens when individuals leave school at age 16. A strategy for widening access therefore requires a range of interventions, including outreach programmes at schools to increase the information available and the aspiration of pupils, further resources to improve education at schools, and additional resources at earlier ages which could both affect aspiration and attainment (Barr, 2003). The paper proposes some approaches to achieve this goal: First, by offering support to HEIs in their attempt to reach out to students from non- traditional backgrounds providing them with information and networks which becomes so important in the time of fees and debt increase; second, by addressing the need for students and their families to be encouraged to achieve greater results in

examinations before HE. In this process, the paper states, working with families and increasing their awareness and aspiration is essential to the success of this method; thirdly, the report emphasised on an effective and fair system of student support. Student support is broadened in this paper with new ideas and prescriptions. According to the white paper, the government believed that the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) (provided to students between 16 and 19 years old) would encourage more pupils to stay on in education. Students entering HE after 1997, have partially contributed towards the cost of their tuition (approximately a quarter of the total cost). This white paper re-evaluates the level of contributions and opens up the market so that HEIs are allowed to charge extra fees of up to £3000 per person. However, such fees will be paid after students have graduated and will be income-contingent and collected through the tax system and not have to be paid up-front. In other words, the original criticism of Dearing made by Barr and Crawford was taken on board. The White Paper indicates a different approach compared to the traditional source of funding for universities. From 2006, when the new policies came into effect, students contributed three-quarters of their fees whilst the taxpayers would pay only a quarter of it.

2.3.1 2003, Widening Participation in HE

Following the publication of the government's White Paper in January, The *Future of HE*, widening participation document delivers the details of the proposals of the White Paper. The document aimed to cope with issues that have raised concerns for both politicians and individuals within HE i.e. how the variable fees would be enforced and managed by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). It also outlines very clearly the areas which, in New Labour's view, needed to be re-designed for the purpose of advancement in widening participation. These areas are mentioned as 'conditions' within the report, and includes: attainment, aspiration, application and admission. It is believed that the evidence suggests that the main obstacles to access are attainment, aspiration and application. The document is divided into four sections: at first it studies the role of attainment within HE, particularly educational attainment prior to entering HE. It understood that there is an under-performance of students from 'less advantaged backgrounds' and defines this as a notable problem within society. It shows the inconsistency in HE attendance between students from families with skilled (manual) occupations, partly skilled or unskilled, in comparison with those coming from families with higher status professions. The increase in HE attendance from both groups has not grown correspondingly and therefore the disparity between participation from both groups has developed. The document compares the 1960 participation levels when there were 200,000 full time students, the difference between both groups was smaller then, than with the present levels. The report blamed the academic

performance within both groups before entering HE – '19 per cent of those from manual backgrounds gain two or more A-Levels by the age of 18 compared to 43 per cent from non-manual backgrounds'.

In subsequent sections of the report the two other 'conditions' are addressed together: aspiration and application. The main argument addresses the level of efforts and actions of HEIs within the widening participation scheme. The New Labour Government argued that universities should work harder towards the following goals:

- Elevate the level of aspirations among young people from non-traditional backgrounds;
- Encourage a higher number of applications; and
- Realise the reason students are fearful of applying to different institution.

The document then, explains more about the 'Office for Fair Access', an office supervising fair access across HEIs. From 2006, HEIs would be required to issue 'Access Agreements' that would demonstrate the efforts that they made to widen participation, and in return they were allowed to charge variable fees with a maximum of £3000 per year. HEIs were also expected to grant extensive funds for widening participation students from the additional revenue generated by the growth in tuition fees. The government also eliminated the need to pay tuition fees up-front, which enabled students to pay their fees after they had graduated. Lastly, the threshold for loans repayment was raised from £10,000 to £15,000. The report once again underlined the government's viewpoint that 'those with a HE qualification on average earn around half as much again as non- graduates', supporting the link between HE qualifications and economic attainment.

In focusing so strongly on the role of aspiration in shaping the likelihood of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in progressing to HE, the government spoke to a growing academic literature. Hutchings and Archer (2001) argued, for example, that students from lower socio-economic groups think of HE as 'a culture dominated by the middle class'. Roberts and Allen (1997) showed that working-class students possess less awareness about HE than the middle-class and they believe that this is due to level of information supplied to them at school. The work of Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) and other social scientists enabled this research to establish a positive association between social and cultural capital theory and views mentioned by the above researchers. Bourdieu (1986) underpins social capital as an entry or access to institutional resources, i.e. group membership to a source or network of individuals, and this may be related to social class networks. His work stresses the structural limitations and uneven access to institutional resources based on factors such as gender, race and class. Social class is considered as a defining element of networks and resources. This plays a crucial role when studying HE participation, as it might be the case that students habitually

join social class differentiated networks and they may influence their aspirations. Therefore, a question arises as to how students make decisions on whether to pursue HE. James Coleman (1988) measures social capital using indicators such as family structure, parent-child discussion, inter-generational closure and religious participation. This could be traced in the work of Hutchings and Archer (2001) on the link between social status and participation in HE. Coleman argues that there may be various types of measures that affect the success and it is associated with financial, human and social capital i.e. family wealth and the support it offers in terms of (a) access to facilities and resources, (b) human capital in relation to the parents' education and life opportunities, and (c) social capital determined by the relationship between parent and child, all act as key influences and determinants of future success (Devincenzi, 2011). Gorard et al. (1999) evidenced the connection between educational attainment of parents and their children; this is important since it suggests that pupils consider their parents as role models. It also suggests that pupils identify themselves with the parental education expectations, and they may adapt themselves to expectations and achievement of their parents. Hutchings and Archer (2001) divided factors that affect young people progression to HE into three categories: 'class aspirations and expectations', 'family influences' and 'working class constructions of HE'. Robertson and Hillman (1997) showed that many working-class youngsters enter employment at early stages and have little expectations of pursuing HE. There is a theme in the above-mentioned research connecting the concepts of human capital and social capital as described by Coleman and Bourdieu, which legitimise the emergence of activities to target these deficits of social and cultural capitals among young people, in particular those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

However, after the changes in HE policy regarding widening access policies and actions made by the New Labour, critiques have developed; questioning the effectiveness and validity of the proposals in this area. Hale (2006) investigated the idea of widening access. She argues that the degrees are now highly desirable requirements for the labour market, and many opportunities are not open to non-graduates anymore. This conclusion implies that HE attendance is not so much an achievement itself, but it appears as a must-have to perform better in the job market. Where previously going on to HE was an achievement, and was accredited as an academic distinction, the shift in society changed it to an expectation. The New Labour government's policies on HE moved from the Robbin's proposals on participation within HE – 'all young persons qualified by ability and attainment to pursue a full time course in HE should have the opportunity to do so' (DfES, 2003). They base their policies on the increase of participation within HE for the following reasons:

- it will enhance the nation's economic well-being
- it will provide better employment and earnings prospects for graduates
- it will promote equality of opportunity (Hale, 2006)

Hale also states that this was one of the New Labour's major policy orientations, to distinguish themselves from the 'elitist' Conservative party:

> 'Not a society where all succeed equally – that is utopia; but an opportunity society where all have an equal chance to succeed; that could and should be 21st century Britain under a Labour Government.' (Blair, 2004)

Notwithstanding the intentions of New Labour, the numbers of students from the lower socio-economic backgrounds has remained almost unchanged as a percentage of the total students entering HE.

2.3.2 Widening participation schemes by the New Labour

In the section on Aspiration and Application in the White paper discussed above the New Labour government mentioned the activities and programmes they introduced in order to achieve their goals. From 2001, through the Excellence Challenge (ultimately renamed Aimhigher), the government provided schools and colleges with additional funds to collaborate with universities; the main purpose being to give youngsters an opportunity to experience life at HEIs by attending master classes, mentoring sessions, summer schools and road shows. They firmly believed these activities would make a difference on the ultimate school performance and young people's aspiration or education expectation. According to the White paper, Aimhigher had already indicated success in raising pupils' aspirations (DfES, 2003b). To operationalise the programs HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council launched 'Partnership for Progression' which was to build 'a regional network of partnerships, created by Excellence Challenge and funding imaginative projects to widen participation'. From 2004, this scheme fell under the Aimhigher programme and was promoted along with other initiatives such as the Academy for Gifted and talented Youth to reflect upon the widening participation agenda and the positive outcomes they argue it offers. In addition to these interventions, the reconstruction of Connexions Service had generated a better opportunity for young people to use tailor-made one-to-one help to make informed choices. They also introduced a wide range of financial help to students from low-income families including a Higher Education Grant equal to £1000 annually. Through these strategies, they created collaboration between HEIs, students and their parents to motivate more

young people into higher education but with an informed decision that the choice is right for them (DfES, 2003b).

3 A CRITICAL CONSIDERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR WIDENING ACCESS

There has been little longitudinal research on the recent policy. However, it is important that an initial evaluation, if somewhat speculative, is undertaken utilising the evidence in hand.

As well as abolishing programmes like Aimhigher, the Coalition felt the responsibility for widening participation should be passed onto universities. Institutions ought to plan, direct and evaluate their own activities. However, with the competition generated in the HE system, where institutions are busy recruiting bright students, it could be argued that the process would lack sufficient financial resources. Neither would it be as efficient as when centrally funded by the state (Cabinet office 2012[3]). It was assumed that some universities with more funds could have been active in widening participation initiatives. Others may have done little to get into schools and set up partnership or sponsorships, and would just do the minimum required by HEFCE. Moreover, there was no benchmark for universities to allocate access budgets since there was no agreed set of outreach programmes required of HEIs. It was, in addition, argued that Office for Fair Access (OFFA) should require institutions to provide an impact document where it showed what they had achieved in this process, in particular for students from less advantaged backgrounds.

There was potential, also, for less motivation for collaboration to form partnerships to tackle the issue of access. For instance, the National Evidence Report summarised Aimhigher (supported by the New Labour government and abandoned by the Coalition) as:

> '... a national programme that holds the needs of the individual learner (and not those of particular sectors or institutions) at its heart; a cross country agenda that has the flexibility and sensitivity to respond to local conditions while being accountable to national standards; and a readymade local, regional and national 'rapid response' structure with the management and delivery expertise to adapt quickly to new government imperatives and to deliver them in ways

[3]Milburn review, University challenge document 2012

> that strengthen local provision through regional and national collaboration.' (Moore and Dunworth 2011).

The abolition rather than reform of Aimhigher and other examples of widening access activities was controversial, especially at a time when tuition fee rises focused greater attention on outreach work. Universities worried that the infrastructure constructed through partnerships such as Aimhigher would weaken, decreasing levels of collaboration. The policy change by the Coalition government served to force universities' widening participation teams to spend significant amounts of time trying to build new structured relationships with schools, and schools had to navigate a confusing storm of offers (Action on Access 2011). Widening participation units across universities also expressed concern that poorly constructed targets were leading to short-term gains at the expense of serious, long-term implementation that would have the biggest impact. Some universities set ambitious and significant targets for the number of disadvantaged students they aimed to admit. Other universities adopted more modest ambitions less likely to have major impact on actual outcomes. Many universities showed resentment at being assessed primarily on inputs, i.e. how much money was being spent on outreach, rather than on the difference they were making (Action on Access 2011).

At the outset, the Coalition government made changes to the funding of the widening participation. The two primary sources of institutional funding were the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) and the HEFCE grant. The new funding policy allocated £368 million in 2012/13 through the HEFCE grant to meet the costs associated with attracting and retaining students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and disabled students (BIS 2012). However, whether the financial resources were spent in a way to meet desired outcomes is something requiring careful evaluation. With universities deciding which programme to choose to cost-effectively meet the OFFA access agreement so that they were able to charge students more than £6000, there were considerable risks that significant numbers of disadvantaged students might end up on courses of study with poor prospect of completion. If graduating, they might struggle to recoup debt incurred in higher tuition fees.

Following the election of the Conservative party in May 2015, a consultation paper was published in November 2015 to advance the HE landscape. Its core goals were to raise teaching standards through the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)[4], improve graduate employability and widen participation in higher education. It set out strategies to drive upward social mobility by increasing higher education attendance by those from disadvantaged and underrepresented classes (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2015). The paper asserted that the government should recognise 'an institution's

[4] This is the Government proposal to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching (House of Commons 2015). The merit of this framework, from this research point of view, is the relationship between teaching quality and tuition fee.

track record', and that eligibility for the TEF should depend on having measurements in place to facilitate the access and success of disadvantaged students. This could be evidenced through having an 'access agreement'.

In the study of increased fees and price sensitivity of disadvantaged students there have been mixed observations numbers from the less privileged classes going to university have continued to expand. Despite the loose evidence, they showed young people from disadvantaged families were '72% more likely to apply for higher education in 2015 than in 2006'. Accordingly, they planned to ensure that their new improvements provided a clear signal to students from disadvantaged backgrounds on the value for money and potential employment outcomes of HE. Although the government target to increase the underrepresented groups' participation by 20 per cent until 2020 was very promising, there were concerns over the implementation of these commitments. For example, they were undermined by the funding policy where maintenance grants were replaced with loans. According to TUC (2015), a wide range of stakeholders, including the Sutton Trust, highlighted that this would be a barrier to widening participation because of the uneven impact on low-income groups. Moreover, it was disappointing that the Spending Review announced that the 'national Student Opportunity Fund would be retargeted and reduced'. This HEFCE funding supported disadvantaged groups and specifically prioritised disabled people (TUC 2015).

In summary, it is too soon to fully evaluate the education policies introduced by the Coalition government and there is not sufficient evidence to comment on the long-term impacts. However, it is perceived that the system will do little to narrow the social gap among university participants which has remained wide according to the national statistics (HESA 2015). There is no standard or a national programme to tackle this issue; and the government's emphasis on market competition may be seen as contrary to widening participation.

In addition to concerns over the effects of the Coalition and Conservative's widening participation policies, there are other questions around the funding of widening access schemes which this research would like to consider.

According to London Economics (2013), the policy changes will not, in the long run, effectively save government the money the Coalition claimed. This view takes into account resultant direct negative impact on individuals' lives, as well as graduates' employment and wages. Their report was commissioned by Million+, the national organisation representing universities tending to recruit large numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It calculated that the new funding policies on higher education would cost the Treasury approximately £6.26b. This assumes that participation in HE is reduced by 30,000, which is correlated also with a smaller pool of graduates as a result. These

sustained costs include £3.001 billion and £0.444 billion in reduced expected earnings and employment outcomes at undergraduate and postgraduate level, respectively. Compared with the year before, lost taxation revenue would be £2.360 billion and £0.463 billion at undergraduate and postgraduate level, respectively. On the whole, the immediate benefits expected to be realised by the Treasury are considerably less than the economic costs in the long run. Taking all of these elements taken, the overall costs of increasing higher education fees was estimated to be almost 61.2 times as great as the potential Treasury expenditure savings (London Economics 2013).

Looking at the big picture from the HE institutions' viewpoint, over the past decade there has been a fairly stable rise in the level of revenue to the UK's higher education sector, i.e. an increase of 43% since 2005–06. Over the same period the level of expenditure has also risen but at a slower rate than income at 38% over the past seven years. Surpluses, as measured by the difference between net revenue and expenditure, increased from 2008–09 to 2011–12, probably owing to greater income diversification and attempts by institutions to reduce costs (Universities UK 2013). The positive shift in institutions' income may reflect their diverse safeguarding strategies against financial uncertainty particularly around future public funding. Between 2009–10 and 2010–11, while 'capital expenditure by English institutions stayed about the same, the amount funded by institutions' own internal cash resources increased four-fold' (Universities UK 2013).

HEFCE forecasted in 2012 an increase in revenue of 2.8% in 2012–13, with further growth until 2014–15. In 2012–13 tuition fee income was expected to account for 42% of total income compared with 34% in 2010–11, and funding body grants would represent 23% of total earning compared with 31% in 2010–11. However, these projections are strongly dependent on institutions reaching their student recruitment targets. Any divergence from these targets, stemming from volatility in enrolment patterns, could potentially influence the financial sustainability of institutions in the short to medium term. Subsequently, the reduction of government spending in HE and vulnerability of university income to student recruitment would potentially result in cost-cutting strategies including fewer teaching resources and sacrificing the quality of learning. This means that wealthier institutions are able to charge more since they possess adequate funds from other sources to cover their costs. Hence, they are better able to compete for higher number of student recruitment, and so the rich become richer and the poor get poorer.

As mentioned above, universities' income is a function of the number of students enrolled. In the working paper published by Lupton et al. in 2015 to investigate the outcome of the Coalition government funding policy, they report a sharp fall in applications in 2012 when the new tuition fee regime was introduced. Although they claim the number recovered in subsequent years, the total

application numbers did not catch up with the figures in 2010, i.e.444,610 in 2010 compared with 428,260 in 2014 (UCAS[5] 2014). An interesting trend also, from this research point of view, is the decline in the socio-economic gap in applications to university. The gap in application rates between English 18-year-olds eligible for FSM and those of other young people decreased by around one percentage point between 2010 and 2014. However students not eligible for FSM remained over twice as likely to apply to university as their FSM peers (UCAS 2014). The gap, in any case, remained substantial (Lupton et al. 2015).

Decreased HE revenue i.e. smaller state funding and increase costs as explained above, would affect students' experiences at university in that they would pay more but receive less. Government anticipated that tuition fees would drop below £7,500 due to competition. Even at this level of fees, students pay twice as much as they did prior to the introduction of the Coalition policies but there would be fewer resources for teaching after recruitment and compliance costs have been deducted. The deficiencies in government strategy risks diverting applicants' preferences towards courses and institutions with promising graduate employment rates and impressive starting salary regardless of whether or not those promises could be fulfilled in future labour market (Holmwood and McGettigan 2011).

It is also argued by the Milburn Review of Social Mobility and Child Poverty that universities have a social mission to reduce social inequality (Cabinet Office 2012). It was to accomplish this mission that HE institutions first created interventions to raise awareness and aspiration of young individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend university. These activities were directly funded by HEFCE and each university would facilitate various types of schemes to meet the requirement of wide access to tertiary education which had been funded for many years by central government. However, the new regime hindered the fair access agenda as universities might have been reluctant to offer places to less bright students with attainment below AAB+. Since there is a strong correlation between socioeconomic background and individual attainment at school (Goldthorpe 1996, McDonald et al. 2009, Fergusson et al. 2008), widening participation based on raising aspirations is limited by attainment at school. This effect is illustrated in Figure 3, with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds less likely to attend university in England and other developed economies (Vignoles and Jerim 2012, Lupton et al. 2015).

[5] Undergraduate and Colleges Admissions Services

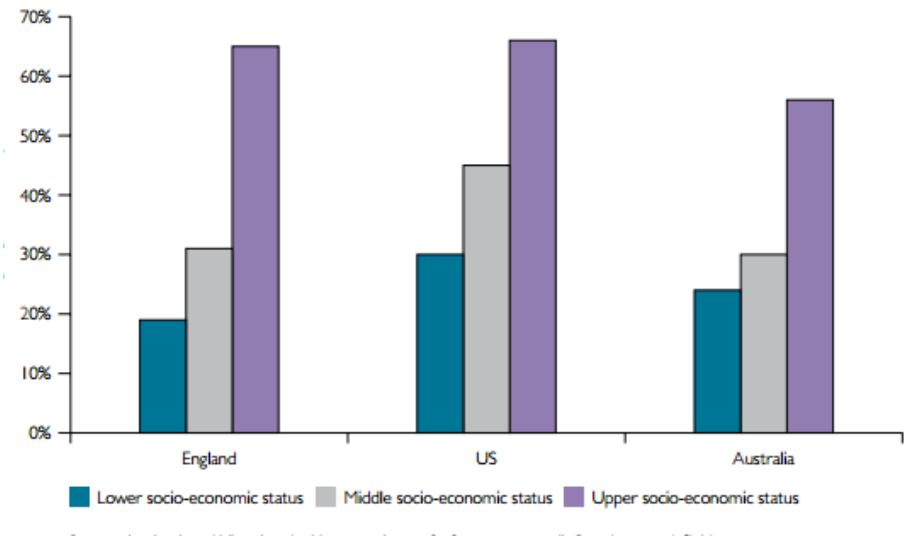

Figure 2. Higher Education Participation rates by social class (HESA 2015)

Croll (2013), in his longitudinal study of higher education participation, identifies that the differences in school-level attainment which is associated with social background is by far the most powerful explanatory variable of HE attendance (also Gorard 2008, Bekhradnia 2003, Crawford et al. 2014).

He also believes that early intention to go to university, i.e. a student's aspiration for tertiary education, formed during school years may account for the socio-economic gap in university attendance. The concept of aspiration was heavily discussed in the New Labour government report on access to the professions, *Unleashing Aspiration* (Cabinet Office 2009). The notion of aspiration, which has played a considerable role in discussions of social mobility, points to 'tension between explanations that emphasise structural determinants of social outcomes and explanations in terms of the actions and intentions of individuals'. The report draws attention mainly to structural factors and clear evidence that social advantage was passed down across generations. However, the concept of aspiration was a reminder that occupational and related outcomes also reflect the 'decisions, choices and personal characteristics' of the individuals who go into these occupations. This paper emphasised the importance of raising aspiration among young people as well as the significant impact that career education can make, particularly to disadvantaged students (Cabinet Office 2009). Unsurprisingly, since the Milburn Review (2012) was under the same leadership, it recommended that HE institutions should become more accessible and focus on work to raise aspiration for university participation. Hence, the report's arguments on attainment and aspiration identify the interconnectedness of human and social capital and how they may affect young people's lives (Coleman 1994).

Making the decision to attend university is an important step in an individual's life, regardless of their background. The conflicting emotions of nervousness and excitement that accompany this decision indicate that, for some people, the transition into university life is not that easy. As such, mechanisms that can aid student transition and promote student success are going to become ever more vital in the higher education landscape (Andrews and Clark 2011). This is even more fundamental in the case of students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds (Croll 2013). One of the means by which universities could smooth this transition is through widening participation activities forming part of, for example, the Aimhigher programme promoted by the Blair and Brown governments[6]. This programme assumed that, through social channels and networks, young people can make better choices which could ultimately lead to university participation.

Prior to Coalition government cuts to budgets for Aimhigher and other widening access schemes, HEFCE (2010) provided quantitative evidence of exceeded predicted GCSE attainment, as well as progression into university, associated with learners' Aimhigher participation in this type of activity. They backed this up with qualitative research showing "high levels of learner enjoyment and increased interest in entering university" (HEFCE 2010). There are also earlier studies (Morris and Golden 2005; Morris and Rutt 2006) that showed statistically significant links between participation in Aimhigher programmes, as an example of widening participation programmes, and both attainment and aspiration outcomes. The result of this analysis might not be causal and fully conclusive but it suggests that the optimism in potential impact of the Aimhigher programme was not entirely misplaced.

4 FINAL REMARKS

Despite not trailing HE policy changes in the Coalition agreement, nor mentioning them in party manifestos, they have, nonetheless, led to a fundamental shift by transferring the burden of the cost of HE to graduates. The Coalition HE policy attempted to overcome what was believed by some to be an overcomplicated and fragmented system inherited by the New Labour government. However, until very recently where the government are addressing the issue of career advice shortcomings, the complexity, fragmentation and lack of attention to employer and community engagement in education () is perceived to have increased compared with when New Labour was in power. Lupton

[6] Aimhigher was launched in April 2004, following the integration of Excellence Challenge (the widening participation programme funded by the then Department for Education and Skills – DfES), and the Partnerships for Progression (P4P) initiative, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). HEFCE and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) fund Aimhigher partnership activities to raise the aspirations and develop the abilities of non-traditional entrants to higher education in order to widen participation amongst those groups. The unique characteristic of Aimhigher, in comparison with other widening participation initiatives, is the concept of coordinated partnerships at an area and borough level, bringing together higher education institutions (HEIs), further education colleges (FECs), schools and academies.

et al. (2015) state that “the government’s approach has itself lacked coherence and structure, with responsibilities continuing to be split between two departments which have pursued their own agendas” (. The main point of interest, from this research’s perspective, is how these policy changes could potentially affect trends of inequality in HE participation. For some of these policies, it is too early to form a judgement. However, for some, consequences can be observed, including changes in the participation gap by social class. It was argued that the Coalition government simply relied on the prospective benefits of human capital accumulation. They believed that young people would simply choose to progress to HE once they were aware of the positive benefits linked to it. They also pushed students to perform better at school since that seemed to be the single most important element in successful entry to university. They seemed to comparatively neglect the structural factors that deter young people’s decision to pursue higher education, including socio-economic backgrounds, aspirations and cultural capital.

Lupton et al., in their evaluation of the Coalition government HE funding policy (2015), argue that one way of decreasing the socio-economic gap and reducing poverty and inequality through the education system is by promoting community engagement and informal learning. Community education can provide a ‘stepping stone to formal education; growing knowledge; building confidence and motivation; reducing social isolation; and strengthening community capacity to support voluntary activity and children’s learning’. Central government cut the funding to local education authorities and levels of HE funding have led to a reduction in these kinds of activities since 2010. Partnerships between HE and schools have been welcomed as a model for engaging and including a wider section of the community (BIS 2013c), but their success depends now on their ability to find other forms of funds. However, funding was cut for programmes like Aimhigher which proved to be beneficial to young people and HEIs (Morris and Rutt 2006). It is very important to take into account the impact of these types of activities on both aspirations of young people from disadvantaged background, and their attainment. These two factors are perceived to be the determinant of HE participation among young people, as argued in previous sections. Since attainment and aspiration to enter HE are products of social class (Goodman and Gregg 2010; Thornton et al 2014; Lupton el al 2015), activities targeting young people coming from less privileged backgrounds become important.

Years of research into widening access has investigated how social class and background factors impact on attitudes towards HE and the value students place on attending university. It makes this research understand why pupils make different choices through consideration of cultural capital, social class and the way people see themselves. Research by Archer et al. (2003) showed that students from lower social classes characterise HE by risk. It is unfamiliar for those whose parents didn’t go to university and making safe choices is key for these young people. Cultural and social capital are

therefore significant concepts in understanding what resources individuals have access to which enable them to make decisions about their future (Thornton et al 2014). Access to knowledge about the changing HE environment and relationships with professionals and networks outside school become crucial; young people from non-traditional families need this in order to facilitate their choices. This argument is supported by Menzies (2013) where he suggests a move towards a model where young people learn how to achieve their aspiration. He stresses the role of information and support, stating that "young people need informed and detailed help to take the pathways that are likely to lead to fulfilment of the longer-term ambitions". Therefore, the type of activities aiming to help young people realise their abilities and help them to achieve their aspirations through informed decisions are, in fact, fundamental in determining the quality of young people's transition to HE.

There is also evidence indicating that raising aspiration could affect attainment. Goodman and Gregg (2010)show that aspirations and expectations for higher education were strongly connected with higher educational attainment. They also found that the expectation of attending university is already very high even in the poorest class. This could suggest that interventions and work is required to convert high expectations and unreasonable aspirations to reality.

From this researcher's point of view, the types of activities overlooked by the Coalition government but that could help young people, especially those coming from less advantaged families, would:

- Help young people to realise HE is not for the elite, i.e. something they can't be part of;
- Help them to develop real and reasonable aspirations;
- Make informed and realistic decisions; and
- Improve their attainment, not as the result of attending activities, but through changed attitudes towards school and understanding of value added by higher attainment.

Throughout this brief history of higher education policy, it is clear that there is a fault line of opinion. On one side are those who believe lack of participation results from individual agency in a way consistent with human capital theory, for example the Coalition.. On the other are those who suggest inequalities are due to structural factors. The question that this thesis addresses is whether the policies promoted by New Labour to raise aspirations did ultimately overcome the structural binds that disadvantaged students have to confront.

The next chapter presents the methodology used to investigate how social backgrounds and participation in activities beyond classroom duties, e.g. work/HE related activities, informal learning, impact students' decisions to apply for, and their expectations of attending HEIs.

Chapter 4: Methodology

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the research questions and how interest in the topic emerged initially, presenting the methodological approach selected to address the questions and the limitations of the methodology. Subsequently, research design, data collection and analysis will be introduced.

2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEIR EVOLUTION

In order to explain the evolution of the research questions, a short summary of what was discussed in the chapter 3 is helpful. When New Labour came back to power in 1997, Prime Minster Blair stated that the party's key priority was 'education, education, education'. As part of this commitment to education, New Labour 'set a target for 50 per cent of the under-30s population to have participated in HE by 2010' (Medway et al., 2003). The widening participation policy was based at the government's need to prepare a labour force for the developing 'knowledge economy'. According to the UK's Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) the term knowledge economy refers to: 'the economic structure emerging in the global information society in which economic success increasingly depends on the effective utilisation of intangible assets such as knowledge, skills and innovative potential' (Roberts, 2009). The developing knowledge economy has contributed drastically to the decline in manufacturing and heavy industry over the past decades. These changing labour market trends obliged New Labour to reconsider the forms of employment that would still be relevant in the future (Hoskins 2012).

The knowledge economy entails highly skilled human capital to secure the future economic growth of the UK. As such, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) challenged that in the twenty-first century:

'It will not be acceptable for young people to leave formal education with few skills. Everyone will need to be knowledgeable, to be able to reason, to think logically and creatively and continue to learn throughout their lives.' (2001)

The need to be knowledgeable can be viewed as a reflection of the rapid changes in forms of employment in the twenty-first century, partly as a result of the digitalisation age and the globalisation. To meet this shift in the economic landscape, widening participation in higher education was essential. Levy and Hopkins (2010) make the case for the insistent need for graduates to support the knowledge economy, arguing that the 'structural change in the economy is creating a strong and increasing need for more highly educated workers'. According to Blunkett (2000), world-class higher education ensures that economies can grow and maintain high skill businesses with highly skilled employees. This has led to substantial expansion of all sectors of higher education over the past 15 years. On the other hand, higher education is one of the drivers to a more socially just nation. Research (for example, Bynner & Egerton, 2001, Sianesi et al, 2003, Feinstein, 2002, Universities UK, 2007) suggests that:

- Graduates enjoy higher quality jobs than non-graduates.
- Graduates receive gross additional lifelong earning
- Graduates enjoy better health outcomes, by being less likely to smoke, more likely to exercise, and less prone to depression.
- Graduates' children also benefit from the educational success of their parents: graduates tend to have a greater involvement with their child's education.
- Graduates are more influential in the community, by being active citizens who are more likely to vote and participate in voluntary activities.
- Graduates show positive attitudes towards diversity and equal opportunities, such as on race and gender equality issues.
- Graduates, with their higher levels of skill, are a source of wider innovation and economic growth.

There are significant financial and non-monetary returns attached to university degrees as mentioned above. The average rate of return associated with a university degree before the enforcement of tuition fees equates 12.1% annually and estimated to increase to 13.2% after altering the student finance package (Universities UK, 2007). Education being a powerful producer of social capital in some contexts, as the research has shown that graduates are more likely to trust, join and engage in politics and are unlikely to be involved in crime even when controlling for other factors such as age and gender (Green, Preston and Sabates, 2003). The Office for Fair Access also believes that low educational

achievement correlates with other factors such as unemployment, welfare dependency and instability in family structure. These factors are important if a nation desires to be economically prosperous, especially that rate of return of higher education to the Exchequer is approximately equal to the rate of return to students, 12% (Universities UK, 2007). Therefore, there are good incentives for governments to invest in education. It appears from their manifesto that the New Labour presented widening participation as an effort to improve social justice, to even the playing field across the social groups, so that, in addition to the economic expansion of higher education, an important feature of widening participation was opening up higher education to a wide range of groups including the 'working classes, females, mature students, ethnic minorities and those with a disability' (Hoskins 2012).

The introduction of the new tuition fees at universities in 2010, and the transmission of power from the central state to HE institutions and the cap on number of bright students recruitment during the past couple of years, there was a fear that young people's decision to pursue higher education is deterred, particularly students from non-tradition backgrounds. There is mix evidence about the impact of increased fees on participation rate (for instance Callender et al. 2005; Marriot 2007; Haultain 2010). However, it is interesting to find out whether the new regime influences aspiration and attainment since the assumption is that these elements could be changed and influenced through carefully selected education policies and initiatives. As such, mechanisms that can aid student transition and promote student success are going to become ever more vital in the higher education landscape, more important for young people from families with less expectation of university education (Andrews and Clark 2011).

Therefore, especially in the light of the changing rules relating to access, there is a need for more targeted information and guidance and access to networks before university entrance in order for young people to navigate their educational pathways, especially in relation to university; in particular those coming from non-traditional families.

This research, is aiming to investigate whether selected government intervention could in fact help widening access to universities through the following questions:

1. Did selected interventions at school used as a proxy for widening participation activities help to raise the educational ambition and achievement of disadvantaged students, particularly in leading them to apply to university?

2. In the light of the findings related to (1), what are the likely effects of dropping these programmes by the state?

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

There is often an intense debate within social science about approaches and methodologies. This research is interested in a realist methodological approach. As Schwandt (1977) adds 'realism is the view that theories refer to real features of the world'. 'Reality' here relates to the ontology of our best theories. Or in a simpler way, realism argues that there is a real world of which we are part and that the observable and unobservable elements of it can be known by a suitable scientific theories and method (Haig and Evers 2015). There are various forms of realism from both epistemology and ontology perspectives, however, they all disclaim that we can have "objective" or definite knowledge of the world, and accept the likelihood of substitute valid accounts of any phenomenon. "All theories about the world are seen as grounded in a particular perspective and worldview, and all knowledge is partial, incomplete, and fallible" (Sayer 2000) .The different forms of realism agree that there is no possibility of attaining a single, "correct" understanding of the world, what Putnam (1999) explains as a "God's eye view" that is separate of any particular standpoint.

The work of Bhaskar in 1978, has received most attention here for its success in elaborating on the nature and structure of the empirical. He is the philosopher who has given critical realism a comprehensible philosophical language and has developed parts of the philosophic belief. At the time he published the first full description, *A Realist Theory of Science* (1978), he was strongly influenced by his teacher, Rom Harré, who in his book *The Principles of Scientific Thinking* (1970) had created the foundations with his thorough criticism of positivism. Harré argued that there had to be 'underlying generative mechanisms were it to be at all possible to analyse the world in terms of cause and effect'. What Bhaskar emphasises here is that the critical question in the philosophy of science is: 'what properties do societies and people possess that might make them possible objects for knowledge?' (1978).The starting point is the ontological question – not how knowledge is possible, which in the past has most often been the case i.e. the epistemological question. In short, the point of departure in critical realism is that the world is structured, segregated, stratified and moving. This involves understanding the nature of social ontology which enables us to see that whatever surface events there may be, which can be identified by data patterns, there will be underlying generative mechanisms which produce these patterns. It is in this sense that ontology is structured. Underlying mechanisms can generate events and observable data patterns and when they are experienced they become an empirical fact. If one desires to obtain knowledge about the underlying causal mechanisms they typically infer these mechanisms from observable data patterns through abductive reasoning. Another key point is that critical realism provides an answer to the contradiction of realism versus anti-realism, where the fundamental inquiry is whether there exists a world independently of human

consciousness. Critical realism's response is that there exists both an external world independently of human mind, and at the same time a dimension which includes our socially controlled knowledge about reality (Danermark et al. 2002).

As discussed in previous chapters, this thesis considers both human agency and structural factors in considering the destination of young people. Realism sheds light on this by emphasising human agency which is the starting point of social enquiry (Bhaskar 1998). However, unlike constructivists, realism entertains the possibility of structures that may constrain or enable action. In the case of this research the question is one of whether social class factors influences the choice of attending an HEI and if it does, how strong that influence is.).

For Realists the key question is one of how observable phenomena can best be explained. This question can be broken down into three sub-categories: "why do evidence and data appear to follow the patterns they do? Why are theories about the world sometimes wrong and what kinds of bodies of evidence are used to substantiate and underpin each theory; and finally, how do we explain the phenomena that we are currently interested in?" (Olsen 2009). The third of these sub-elements is a major task which is based on the idea, articulated above, that there may be underlying causal mechanisms which generate observable data patterns. Realists argue that structures exist, and they support the use of variables as either independent or dependent variables in regression analyses; social class, sex, age, ethnicity and geographical locations are examples of measurements of structures. If quantitative methods can use proxy measurements of structure to investigate patterns of connectedness of variable factors with outcomes, as discussed by Olsen and Morgan (2005), then these methods can also be used to find latent factors that are only implicitly (not directly) measured in data sets (Olsen and Morgan 2005). For instance, Byrne (2009) and Walby and Olsen (2004) have successfully applied statistical methods to examine social patterns in school attainment and the gender pay gap, respectively. In addition to measuring structural effects, and presenting latent factors and institutions, researchers can also use statistical models to identify actions and agency.

The use of statistical inference in the interpretation of social data is accepted by Downward, Finch, and Ramsay (2002) if they have appropriate justifications. Finch and McMasters (2003) argue that there are different epistemological pathways through the econometric analysis process, and there is not a unique quantitative technique, which realists can refer to. Downward, Finch and Ramsay (2002), Martinetti (2000), Neff (2013), Olsen and Morgan (2005) all differentiate acts of interpretation from acts of calculation. The manipulation of numbers is part of quantitative research, they note, but it does not deplete quantitative method. People who use methods to study the universe through numbers also conduct a qualitative stage of categorising numbers (into theoretical categories or

scales), making assertions about the measurement units, and later doing a further qualitative stage of interpretation. Some raise doubts about quantitative methods when they are not complemented with qualitative techniques (Olsen 2009). In response to their scepticism, Olsen (2009) argues that the process of designing a quantitative research requires in-advance qualitative research to enable the scholars to measure structure and agency appropriately and by literature-led indicators.

In this research, quantitative research method is selected to investigate the correlations between variables of interest. However, it may be considered as preliminary in that qualitative methods may be subsequently used to develop and elaborate on the causal mechanisms that may have caused the observable data patterns. Although an initial identification may be undertaken using factor analysis or structural equation modelling. Looking at this issue from another perspective, Babbie and Robin (2011) argue, if the purpose of a study is to test whether an intervention is effective, it is more likely that the researcher will apply quantitative research procedures that are highly "structured and specified" in advance. After carefully selecting this methodology, the first step is to gain access to data sets that enable sound measurements and variable manipulation that relate to the aims of the study. Recalling the research questions, the study requires developing quantitative proxies for the social episodes of young people. According to Best (1970), this counts as descriptive (developmental) research; it is concerned with how "what is" or "what exists" is related to some preceding events that has influenced or affected a present condition or phenomenon. One type of descriptive research is longitudinal study, which has wide application in education and since education is related to individual's social, intellectual and emotional growth, descriptive studies continue to occupy a major place to the methodologies applied by scientists (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

4 LONGITUDINAL STUDIES AND THEIR MERITS

The concept of longitudinality is used to portray a wide range of studies that are conducted over a timeframe where measurements are taken at different points in time from certain individuals. Longitudinal data allows the researchers to analyse the duration of a social phenomenon, highlights similarities, differences and change over time respecting one or more variables , identify long term effects and also explain change in terms of stable characteristics such as sex, ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds or other variables such as income (Ruspini, 2002). Ruspini (2002) argues that the strength of longitudinal studies lies in their ability to determine causality and make inferences as well as to construct a more advanced human behaviour models comparing to cross-section and time series data. However, they are also challenged by the problem of response rates, the cost of conducting such

surveys and how a measurement effect can appear over time (Ruspini, 2002). Measurement effect occurs as a result of repeated interviews which causes an undesired and confusing status in the attitudes of an interviewee influencing the behavior of the subjects (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). However cohort studies are predominantly suitable for research in human growth and development. The strength of a cohort study is weaknesses of cross-sectional and it is important to know that cross-sectional studies are less effective when one requires investigation in human development and causal relationship (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). In summary, the advantages of longitudinal studies over cross-sectional studies, according to Douglas (1976) are the following:

- In cohort studies, no duplication of information happens, whereas in cross-sectional studies the same type of background information has to be gathered in every observation. This increases the cost of interview.
- The omission of a single variable, later found to be important, from a cross-sectional study is a disaster; but it is possible in a cohort study to fill in the gap, even if partially, in the next sweep.
- A cohort study allows the accretion of larger number of variables, covering a much larger area of knowledge due to the collection of data spread over many interviews.

Because some cohort studies start at birth, the problem of sampling is removed and it allows the extensive use of sub samples. It also enhances the problem of estimating bias and reliability.

This study, therefore, is using longitudinal data to examine the correlation coefficients in the model, which will be explained later on in this section.

5 BUILDING A MODEL: THE ASSUMPTIONS

Before the creation of the model, more detail about the assumptions and hypotheses made for the purpose of examining the association of the variables, and the variables themselves is given. The aim of this piece of work is to evaluate the Coalition government's new funding regime, which reduced the spending in HE, and axed the fund for outreach programs such as AimHigher in contrast to the New Labour government that promoted these types of interventions and emphasised more investment in education. According to the literature provided in previous chapter, widening participation themes aimed to increase the number of disadvantaged pupils with sufficient

qualification and aspiration to enter HE. In summary, controlling for all the background factors at school level and individuals, possible statistically significant correlations are investigated between policy interventions, students' attainment and aspiration (Morris and Rutt, 2006). It is of interest to the author to look at the data from another angle; outreach programs such as AimHigher proved to influence educational performance (HEFCE, 2010b, Vignoles & Crawford, 2010), level of aspiration for young people and their positive attitude (Morris and Rutt, 2006, Morris et al, 2009, Moore and Dunworth, 2011). In the model generated by this research, it is intended to find out whether outreach activities could potentially act partially as a compensation for social disadvantage when it comes to closing the gap in HE participation using a set of theory and literature-led variables. However, since there is no longitudinal data available to allow measuring the impact of outreach programs designed by the New Labour some techniques is applied which will be explained later on in this chapter.

The rationale behind widening participation, from this research point of view, could be associated with the fact that different opportunities that exist across socio-economic background and family status is connected to different teenage aspirations, transition to adulthood and attainment (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Vondrack et al, 1986). Individuals from wealthier families have access to better educational opportunities, better access to financial resources, reliable role models, occupational awareness and networks of professionals (Marshall, Swift and Roberts, 1997; Schulenberg, Vondracek and Crouter, 1984). Interventions such as those promoted by New Labour therefore are designed to provide first-hand information about HE and the prospects to those who do not have otherwise access to such information nor any network to facilitate that for them and are not aware of the life at university or college; mainly because they are coming from non-traditional backgrounds where further education or HE is not a priority, their families do not expect them or motivate them to acquire what is necessary to pursue higher education.

Hence, in this research, it is intended to investigate whether outreach programs by HEIs and schools provide some compensation for teenagers coming from non-traditional families with respect to access to HE and the quality of their transition to the next stage; the data trace students who were involved in school-mediated and widening participation programs coming from various family backgrounds and compares them with a group who had no such engagements.

For the purpose of this analysis, the model built by Schoon et al. (2006) "Developmental-Contextual" is used to monitor teenagers through their life course. The original model is as follows:

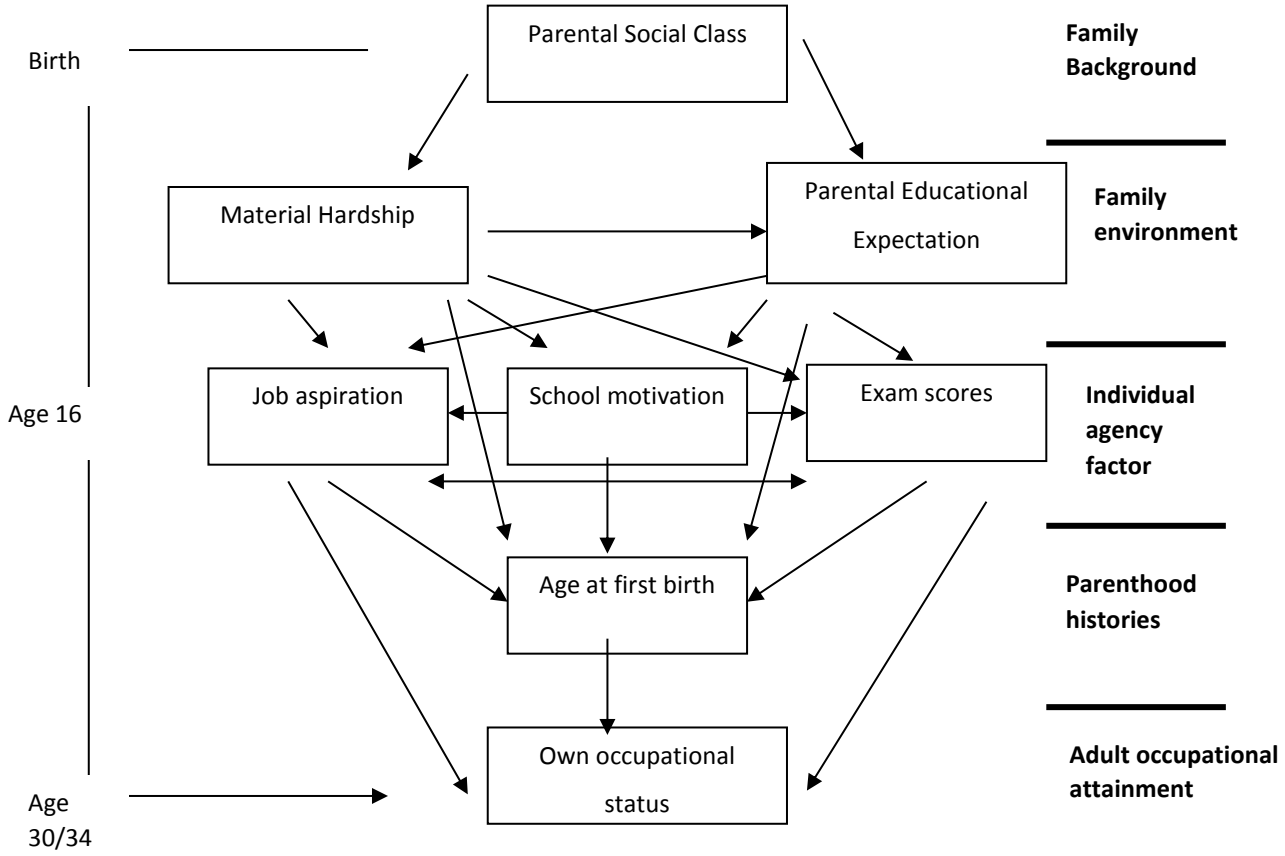

Figure 3. Developmental-Conceptual model by Schoon et al. (2006)

As concluded in the theory chapter, this research believes that there is a combination of agency and structure which potentially determines young people's destinations after school. The model above portrays this really well and highlights some representation of both agency and socio-economic factors. It is hypothsesised, for this model, that parents from privileged social status have greater expectations for their children and provide good quality support including material and financial (Erikson and Jonsson, 1996; Vondracek et al, 1986). It is also assumed that the interactions between family environment and personality create inter-individual disparities in the timing and patterns of transitions at different ages (Reitzle, Vondraeck and Silbereisen, 1998). The timing and pattern of transitions is also understood to be linked to individuals' agency (Mortimer, 1994; Reitzel and Vondracek, 2000). The creation of life plans during teenage years can assist and direct the transition from present to future, and they are significant estimators of future education and occupation outcome (Clausen, 1991). Another mediating factor in the model is school motivation in shaping the transitions. Pupils who have not been involved in learning will experience slower and more complex transitions (Steedman and Stoney, 2004). Using all these factors, Schoon et al. (2006) have built a model where they can see the effect of both individual agency and social structures in the later life

which makes it a reasonable benchmark for this research, as explained in the previous chapter, to find out whether it is only societal structures including family backgrounds that determine young people, it is only human agency or it is a combination of the factors that affect their decisions to attend university.

However, the author intends to extend the model to test the hypotheses developed earlier. There are factors added to the model to examine different pathways to adulthood in the light of policy interventions at certain periods. Since it is of interest of this work to study the influence of family background on youngsters' transition to adulthood, the measurement used in Schoon et al. (2006; 2011) is applied to the extended model as well as few other variables shown in the following diagram.

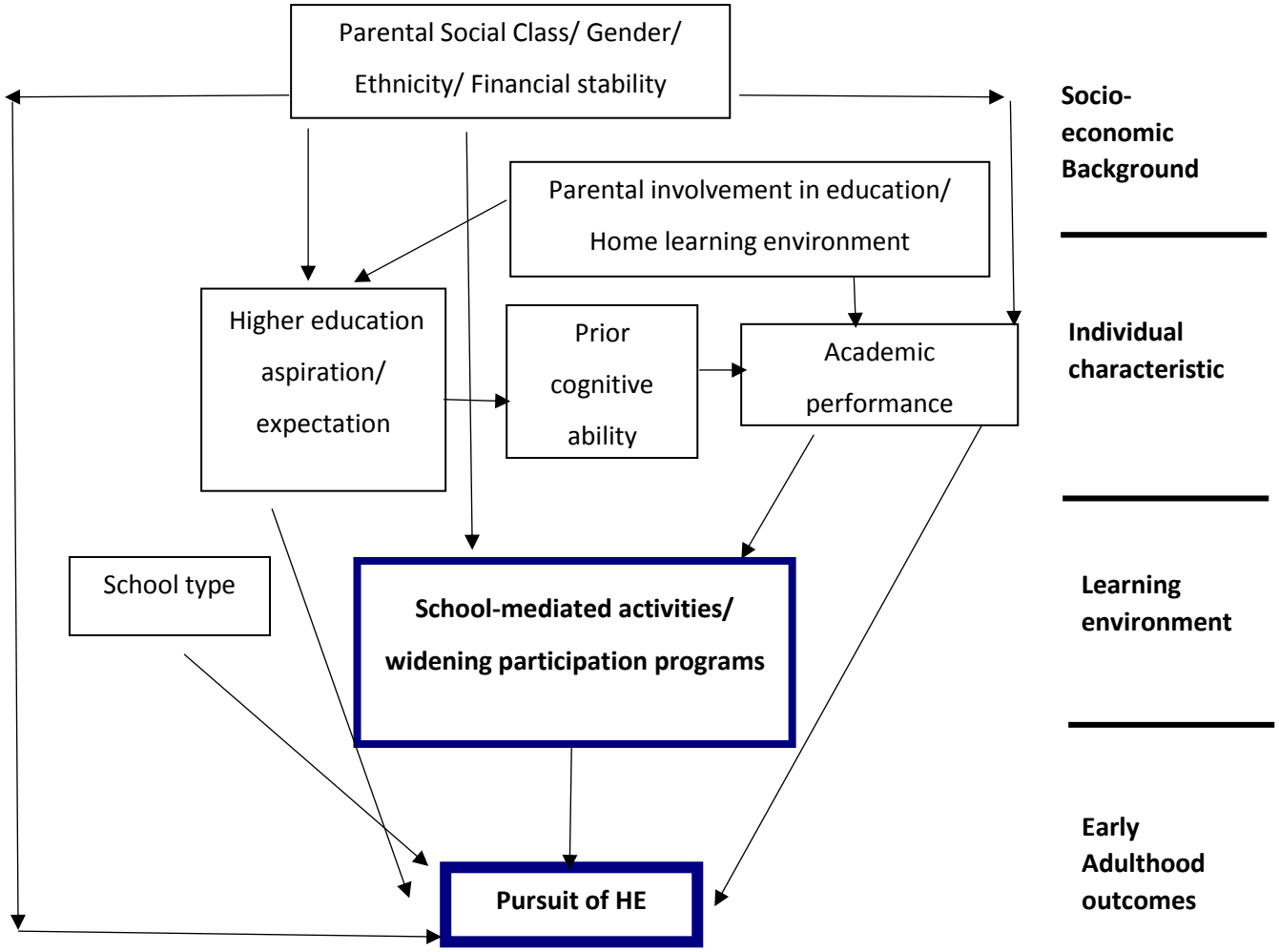

Figure 4. Developmental-Conceptual model by Schoon et al. (2006)

For each variable, Schoon et al (2006; 2010) defined robust measurements, which will be applied in this analysis. For those additional variables that are new to the model, the analysis relies heavily on the literature to determine what sound measurements could be used to.

6 DATA COLLECTION

Longitudinal research offers an understanding of social movements, of the trajectories of cohort members' life histories and of the dynamic processes that underlie social and economic life, which is not possible using cross-sectional data. The development of longitudinal studies in the UK has also led

to advancements in social science methodological approaches and the understanding of major changes and policy interventions (DfE 2010).

This research methodology utilises two longitudinal databases to see whether widening access activities can make a difference to the aspirations and participation of those from disadvantaged backgrounds in HE. Unfortunately a longitudinal data set which allows to test the Coalition government funding policy does not yet exist and it is too early to form a judgement of it, however there are data available that could potentially provide insights to find the effects of interventions in young people's education in relating to tertiary education. Now the question is does the data ask young people whether they participated in HE-related learning activities directly or not? The respond this research suggests is even if there are not questions directly asked by this questionnaires there are some other types of activities that students took part in while at school which targeted similar factors to be enhanced in individuals including school engagement activities (similar to the term work-related learning activities organised for young people while they are at school in the policy terms). Professor Pru Huddleston (2004) defines these activities those which are concerned with the development of work relevant knowledge, skills, understanding and personal attributes. The approach is aligned with advice from influential international commentators (for example Symonds et al. 2011; Mourshed et al. 2012). Huddleston and Oh (2004) refer to a strand of these activities (including career talks, workplace visits, work experience, mentoring)[7] which has been associated with the desire to increase motivation and to raise attainment (also Rudd & Steedman, 1997; Huddleston, 2002). These activities became highlighted for the need to create a more engaging curriculum for those whom the traditional route to post-16 education was unattractive. Also there are few studies in the UK that explored the relationship between activities as such and education outcomes through better attainment or higher aspiration (Miller 1999; Nao 2010; Golden et al. 2005; Harrison et al 2012).

This approach, therefore, allows this research to use more comprehensive datasets which asks the cohort members about their experiences at school under the New Labour government which has the history of enforcing work-related learning and school engagement activities. The only longitudinal data which matches the time the New Labour government was in power is the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE). The measurements of social factors and background variables are going to be extracted from this dataset. Additionally, to be able to test whether the hypothesis developed here hold under another government and also in part for an intergenerational comparison,

[7] Widening participation programmes included activities such as campus visits, school/college visit, mentoring, master classes, revision classes, summer schools, contacts with university staff (HEFCE, 2007) which are assumed to be, by nature, very similar to the interventions at school level such as work place visits, mentoring, career advice etc.

there will be a parallel analysis using the British Cohort Study 1970 (BCS). In many studies (for example Schoon et al. 2006; Breen and Goldthorpe, 2001) researchers use two cohorts to either compare the results or validate their findings across data with different characteristics. In 1986 when the cohort members were 16, there were no activities such as AimHigher; but analogous programs to widening participation programs were available which enables some comparison with AimHigher.

This longitudinal dataset also allows an investigation of societal factors in the determination of young people's lives after school as well as human agency, in 1986-96 where the Conservative Party was in power and under different economic atmosphere. If for example, there are similar effects for both generations then this would provide evidence of the robust nature of such interventions. In turn, if these interventions in 1986 and in the first decade of the new millennium prove to be positive, then this suggests that the Coalition's assumption that it is the simple calculation of means to ends as presupposed by the human capital view of human motivation (homo economicus) that drives participation in HE, regardless of social background, may prove to be in question.

The next section will present, in-depth, the detail of each database and what they can offer.

6.1 Longitudinal Study of Young People in England

As highlighted previously, this research is using longitudinal data to follow young individuals throughout the course of life from early age to adulthood.

LSYPE, also known as Next Steps, commissioned by the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and now managed by Centre for Longitudinal Studies, is an innovative cohort study of young people which collects data from various sources, including both annual interviews with young individuals and their parents and administrative sources (ESDC, 2012). The original sample for the analysis was 21,000 young people across England; however, the final size is 15,770 individuals from different backgrounds [8] (DfE, 2011). The key role of the survey is to enable examination and understanding of, the main elements affecting young people's development in transition from the later years of compulsory schooling, through subsequent education or training, to entry into the job market or other outcomes. Data is used, among other things, to screen the progress of the cohort members, assess the success or otherwise of policy aimed at this group and provide an evidence base for further policy research. The sample is representative for deprivation factors and for ethnicity (ESDS, 2012). LSYPE looks into young people's experiences while at school, their relationships with

[8] In common with other cohort studies, LSYPE and BCS sample size has declined as the cohort has aged (Center for Longitudinal Studies, 2004) however both still large enough to be used for extensive research and policy analysis.

their families, their experiences of transitions into adulthood and job market, their aspirations for their future, and, how these relate to their family backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances (DfE 2010); it follows the transitions of a representative cohort of young people in England into adulthood in greater depth than any other existing data source.

Wave one of the study started in 2004, right at the beginning of Aimhigher creation, when the sample of young people were aged between 13 and 14, one year after Excellence Challenge came to practice under the AimHigher name. This implies that the cohort in LSYPE has experienced some kind of outreach programs in addition to any other types of activities before entering HE or labour market. The members continued being interviewed annually until 2010 in wave 7 when they aged 19/20 (right before the change of government) providing reflection on the influences on their learning and progression. The next round of this data will be available publicly in 2016. Subjects questioned in each round of LSYPE are tailored to collect data according to the young person's stage of life (for instance wave 1 of LSYPE asked about reasons for Year 10 subject choices). The most recent wave consists of questions on experiences of further education, Apprenticeships and employment). In Waves 1-4, young people and their parents were interviewed, but from Wave 5 young people are the only subjects. There was been a minority ethnic boost in the original sample design, however an additional change was implemented at Wave 4 to improve on the original boost and account for the disproportionate reduction in sample over time. In Waves 1-4, the mode of data collection was one-to-one interview. In Waves 5-7, respondents first were invited to complete an online questionnaire, then to the telephone interview and then to face to face if they refused, or were unable to complete using other methods (DfE 2010).

The data were built by selecting pupils who attended maintained schools, independent schools and pupil referral units. Pupils were sampled in a two-staged design. At first schools were selected and then pupils were sampled from each of the schools at the second. In maintained schools, selection criteria varied so schools were "over-sampled" base on their deprivation level (measured by the percentage of students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)); and also students from some minority ethnic groups were "over-sampled" to assure sample sizes were large enough to enable subgroup investigations (DfE 2010).

The LSYPE response rate has been calculated using a standard approach for presenting response to longitudinal datasets. This approach draws heavily on the work of Lynn (2005):

- Cross-sectional unconditional and conditional response rates
- Longitudinal unconditional and conditional response rates

Table 4.1 The response rate across LSYPE cohorts

Wave	Issued questionnaire	Achieved sample
Wave 1	21,000	15,770
Wave 2	15,678	13,539
Wave 3	13,525	12,439
Wave 4	12,468	11,449*
Wave 5	11,793	10,430
Wave 6	11,225	9,799
Wave 7	9,791	8,682

* Source: DfE Interactive LSYPE (2011)[9]

Of those who initially responded at Wave 1, dropouts remain even between Waves. Approximately 7% of the initial cohort members dropped out across waves. The highest category of non-responders in all rounds (of those who responded at the previous wave) was the refusals or opt-outs. The second highest category is people who moved to another location (except wave 5) (DfE 2010). Investigations of non-response in longitudinal data have revealed that it most likely has systematic elements and is not random. However, at the same time, many studies have showed that the systematic features of non-response account for a very small part of the variation in response. Conclusions have often been made, therefore, that non-response, despite the systematic component of it, is not a serious problem to the representativeness of the study in the case of many longitudinal studies (Macurdy et al, 1998 for NLSY; Hawkes and Plewis, 2006 for NCDS; Watson, 2003 for ECHP).

To tackle the problem of missing information or item non-response LSYPE generated a weighting system which improves the quality of the findings based on predictors of the non-response including parental socio-economic factors, income, tenure etc. This study applies these weights when running the analysis to reduce the bias introduced by potential underrepresented groups of people[10] (Tarek and Wiggins 2014).

[9] https://www.education.gov.uk/ilsype/workspaces/public/wiki/UserGuide/ResponseRates

[10] The analysis is conducted initially without the weights and then using the weights provided by LSYPE to compare the effect of the non-response on the result of the regression.

The measurements selected to test the hypotheses developed here are extracted from different waves. In the first round of questions (wave 1 to 4) young people and their parents are asked about their background and household information which allows for in-depth analysis of the impact of societal factors on young people's pathways through education system. LSYPE is also linked with the National Pupil Database (NPD), which includes the cohort members' individual scores at Key Stage 2, 3 and 4; this is particularly useful as it makes it possible to control for prior attainment as a proxy of individual agency. From wave 4, 5, 6 and 7 data is collected for young people's activities at school, attitudes, aspirations, expectations, and plans for future and finally whether they participated HE. The detail of the variables selected across sweeps is presented later in this chapter.

6.2 BRITISH COHORT STUDY 1970

The British Cohort Study (BCS) 1970 is the study about births and families of babies born in the UK in one particular week in 1970. Since BCS70 began, there have been seven full data collection exercises in order to monitor the cohort members' health, education, social and economic circumstances (ESDS, 2012). These took place when respondents were aged 5, 10, 16, 26 30, 34, 38 and 42 (age 46 to be published in 2016). . The 1970 British cohort was designed to survey approximately 17,000 babies born in England, Scotland and Wales. The 1970 study is a genuinely multi-discipline study which has collected information from cohort members on many different aspects of their household circumstances, health and well-being, education, and social development as they have moved from childhood, through adolescence, and into adult life.

In eight attempts to trace all members of the birth cohort different sources and methods were used to gather data on the cohort members. In the birth survey, the midwife present filled in a questionnaire and supplementary information was obtained from clinical records. As the cohort members aged, the techniques and information collected changed; health visitors interviewed the parents, teachers completed surveys, medical examinations were conducted, and individuals themselves participated in educational assessments. From ages 5 and 10 immigrants born in the same week were added to the sample (CLS 2015). The BCS70 has its name changed over time. The first two waves of the BCS70 – at ages 5 and 10 – were carried out by the Department of Child Health at University of Bristol and were referred to as the "Child Health and Education Study". In 1986, the International Centre for Child Studies ran the age 16 which they called "Youthscan". Then in 1996, the age 26 was conducted by the Social Statistics Research Unit at City University. In 1998 the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS) at the UCL Institute of Education accepted the management of the survey

and they carried out surveys in 2000, 2004 and 2008, with the National Centre for Social Research. The most recent wave of the BCS70 was carried out from 2012-2013 (CLS 2015).

The British Cohort Study include a large sample and extensive data coverage, which includes questionnaires for eight age points to date, information about cohort members' children in 2004, vast use of objective measures, standard tests and scales, as well as simultaneous coverage of physical, emotional, and behavioural developments at early ages (Elliot and Sheperds, 2006). These factors provide exceptional predictors for this study. There are questions in the survey directly asked about the information this analysis is interested in, for instance all the related socio-economic variables.

Similar to LSYPE and other panel data, BCS suffers from the loss of sample size throughout the time. Despites missing data for survey loss and incomplete questionnaires, bias has been shown to be minimal (Butler et al., 1997). The cohort has sustained its characteristics despite a loss of disadvantaged members of the cohort, and a higher population of women than men (Plweis, Calderwood, Hawkes and Nathan, 2004). Additionally, the 16-year follow up questionnaire was conducted at the time of teachers' strike, which implies many interviewees did not receive the survey. Although there was a small response rate, all the members were affected in a similar way and the demographic features of the sample at age 16 remained representative of the population (Sheperd, 1997).

Table 4.2 The response rate across British Cohort Study waves

Wave (Age)	**wave 0 (birth)**	**wave 1 (age 5)**	**wave 2 (age 10)**	**wave 3 (age16)**	**wave 4 (age 26)**
Observed sample	16571	12981	14350	11206	8654
Non-response	716	2812	1108	3293	4765
Uncertain eligibility	0	668	723	1500	2307
Target sample (estimated)	17287	16461	16181	15999	15726

*Source: Centre for Longitudinal Study 2004

Unfortunately, unlike LSYPE, which offers, ready to use already-generated weights to boost the analysis, BCS70 does not include such weights. However, there are researches, which suggest different predictive factors could be applied as weights including income, socio-economic variables, gender etc.

(Tarek and Wiggins 2014; Ketende 2010; DfE 2010). This research is going to use household income as the weight for the following reason: there is an expectation that questions about finances will be affected greatly from high levels of non-response because individuals tend to view such information as "highly sensitive and potentially open to misuse if made public" (Juster & Smith, 1997; DfE 2010). Income also, from this research point of view, is interconnected with some other socio-economic factors such as home ownership, social class and education level.

During 1958 and 1970, British society has undergone many substantial changes in many aspects. While during 1958 children grew up during a period of economic prosperity and smooth social transformation according to Hobsbawn (1995); he called it "Golden Age". Cohort of 1970, however, came to age in a period of increasing instability and insecurity, "the Crisis Decades" (Hobsbawn, 1995). The crisis in 1980 brought high unemployment, a decline in manufacturing jobs and fast growth in the service industry (Gallie, White, Cheng and Tomlinson, 1998). This gives a context to the transition patterns observed and assumptions regarding pathways formulated in the model. In times of economic prosperity, young individuals are more likely to enter the labour market at early stages and achieve early financial stability and a smoother transition to adulthood (Bynner, 2001). Whereas in recession time society undergoes structural changes and young people are more likely to delay on the transition to adulthood (Reitzel et al., 1998).

7 MEASUREMENTS

As mentioned above, Schoon et al. in their works in 2006 and 2010 introduced valid measurements to quantify the variables included in the Developmental-Contextual model. As this research builds upon their work, it will applies similar measurements and their definition when suitable; for the new variables added to the model for the purpose of testing new hypotheses variables used will be defined using past literature suggesting why they are selected.

The type of activities young people asked about in both datasets are slightly different; LSYPE records young people experiences of work experience, career talk with Connexion advisors and mentoring while BCS asks them about workplace visits instead of mentoring along with work experience and career talk with outside speakers. The assumption is made in this research that work experience definition is unchanged throughout the years; this is a 1-2 week placement with a professional body outside school which is a very common definition used by practitioners and policy makers (UKCES 2013). Therefore, the analysis of work experience in both studies is relatively comparable. Regarding

the career talk, both cohorts ask the question from young people's experience talking to external recourses rather than internal career provisions. LSYPE presents the data on students' encounter with Connexion advisors[11] which is a supplementary advisory service for young people from an external organisation. BCS also asks young people whether they talked with people from outside school about their future plans. The questions are not identical but since they both identify young people's encounter with external people it could potentially be comparable. However the third activity presented in LSYPE is of a different nature to BCS; LSYPE asks young people whether they talked to a learning mentor i.e. someone who does not teach a specific subject and helps pupil with problems they have to do well in school. This might not be exactly similar to business mentoring or being mentored by professionals from outside school but still is assumed to be accounted as a useful source of advice and information which affects young people performance at school or their motivation to do well and work hard. On the other hand, BCS does not gather data for mentoring and instead has information of young people visiting workplaces. The effects these two activities could have on young people are probably different and not so comparable. However, it could add to the insights this research is gathering into the effects of different activities on students' perception of university and their participation. Therefore, the analyses of the work experience and career talks are comparable to a certain extent. In addition, the analysis of the mentoring and workplace visits should be reviewed separately despite the fact that they are both perhaps designed to better prepare young people for the world after school.

The additional difference observed is the measurement of education expectation and aspiration across both cohort studies. LSYPE and BCS both present data on education expectation asking a similar question from young people post-16 education plans, however, they ask it at a different age. LSYPE asks this question at age 15 whereas BCS provide information of students at age 16. This shouldn't affect the interpretation of the result largely as it is assumed those who expect to stay in full time education at age 16 probably started to think about it from at least an academic year before, as they need to choose subjects for GCSEs and their future education plans. The obvious dissimilarity between LSYPE and BCS is in the measurement of aspiration for higher education. While LSYPE explicitly asks students at age 13 how likely it is that they apply for HE later on (used as the indicator of aspiration for HE if they responded very likely), BCS does not provide such data. Instead, BCS asks whether young people are aspired to a career which needs a degree; this variable is used as the proxy for aspiration to attend university assuming that those who have a career aspiration that requires a degree are

[11] The Connexions Service, part of the Department for Education and Skills, was launched nationally on a phased basis in April 2001 with an annual budget of £450 million and is delivered through a network of 47 Connexions Partnerships. It aims to help all young people make informed choices and ease the transition into adult life (DfE 2004).

certainly aspired to pursue higher education. However this could potentially be accounted as a caveat which needs acknowledgement in the data limitation.

In the following section, each dataset i.e. LSYPE and BCS70 and their measurements are explained in detail.

7.1 LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ENGLAND

7.1.1 Socio-economic backgrounds

As discussed in the previous chapters, parental social class has a considerable impact on the way young people live their lives including their education pathways (Yates et al. 2011; Schoon et al 2010; Schoon et al 2006; Dickerson and Jones 2004; Duckworth and Schoon 2012). Similar to Schoon et al. 2010 main parent's social class is selected to reflect family socio-economic status (SES). This is a measurement of parental occupational social class calculated by the Registrar General's measure of social class defined according to job status and the associated education, prestige (Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys (OPCS 1980) or Lifestyle (March 1986). This is assessed by the current or last job of the child's father and when absent child's mother (whoever is the main parent at the time of interview). This variable is coded into 8 categories of occupation level from highest to lowest i.e. 1 being higher managerial and professional occupations and 8 being long term unemployed. Although social class is a categorical variable, here it is treated as a continuous measurement in this analysis as it contains more than five categories and it is suggested by statisticians that results were similar to when treated as categorical (Rhemtulla 2012). Main parent social class data is collected from wave 1 in 2004 where young people are 13; this question is asked directly from the main parent.

Second to the SES variable of interest is gender. Male and female respond differently to social setting and have dissimilar attitudes toward schooling and plans for future (Gutman and Schoon 2010; Yates el al. 2010; Duckworth and Schoon 2012). To understand the effect of cohort member's sex on their plans to attend university this data is collected from wave 1 in 2004; the variable is coded 0 for male and 1 for female.

Traditionally, ethnicity played a critical role in determining young people's destination after compulsory education and even while they were at school (Johnson et al. 2001; Richardon 2008). Although the patterns seem to have changed and ethnic minority community are performing better in school comparing to their peers born to the UK parents, it appears that this variable could still affect the variation in university participation. LSYPE asks about the young people ethnic origin in wave 1

and it is an 8-category measurement. For the purpose of this study and investigating the impact of the mixed-race family origin versus white-background families, the variable is transformed to a binary variable where 1 is white and 0 non-white ethnic origin.

Ingrid Schoon (2006; 2010) uses material conditions as an indicator of financial stability which contains four different measurements including tenure, household amenities, overcrowding and receipt of state benefit. However this study assumes if parental social class is taken into model to represent SES, this variable is correlated, potentially, with means of providing a financially stable environment; therefore as those families in higher occupational groups are more likely to be financially stable the three variables except tenure are excluded from the analysis to avoid the risk of introducing multicollinearity. Tenure is, not entirely, a separate variable as house ownership is a function of wealth distribution in an economy and could be independent of income earned by employment (Wind et al 2015). Information about house ownership is collected in sweep 1 in the household section and is an 8-category variable. In this study a dummy variable is derived base on this information where 1 is defined as ownership and 0 is other situations.

Another variable used to reflect the measurement of disadvantage into the estimation model is the receipt of Free School Meal (FSM)[12]. Social deprivation, as measured by eligibility for free school meals, can clearly be considered to operate well where being eligible for free school meals might indicate a particularly disadvantaged individual or family (Shuttleworth 1995). LSYPE asks young people whether they were eligible for FSM while they were at school. The response is coded 0 when their response was negative and 1 if they were eligible.

As part of the background variables parental attention to young person's education is considered to be in the model as suggested by literature including Schoon et al. (2006). Family learning can provide a range of benefits for young people including improvements in reading, writing and numeracy as well as greater parental confidence in helping their child at home (Brooks et al 1997; Astone and McLanahan 1991). The attitudes and aspirations of parents and of young people themselves predict later educational attainment. International evidence suggests that parents with high aspirations are also more involved in their children's education (Gutman et al. 2008). LSYPE asks main parents about their involvement in their children's school life; this is a 4- category measurement from 1 being very involved to 4 being not at all involved. For the analysis in the next chapter a dummy variable is created dividing the parent to two groups of not involved coded as 0 and very involved as 1.

[12] In England a Free School Meal (FSM) is a statutory benefit available to school aged children from families who receive other qualifying benefits and who have been through the relevant registration process (Department for Work and Pension 2013)

In the analysis, being born to a single parent is taken into account as a proxy for family structure. In their research, Astone and McLanhan (1991) show that young people who live with single parent during adolescence receive less help and encouragement with schoolwork than children who live with two parents. In Lauder et al. (2010) research of the impact of family composition on pupils' progress and school performance, they state that the proportion of single parents in the lower social classes is higher than the higher ones (26 percent and 7 percent respectively). Therefore this variable is extracted from LSYPE questions on young people background; those who were born to single parents are coded as 1 and those who didn't are coded as 0.

7.1.2 Individual's characteristics

Cohort members' personal attributes play a crucial role in determining their future education pathways in particular their academic abilities, their level of cognitive skills and their aspiration for pursuing further education. In this research, similar to many other conceptual models developed by past literature (Schoon and Parsons 2002; Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007; Gutman and Schoon 2012) exam results at the end of compulsory education is used as a proxy of academic ability. In sweep 7 in 2010 young people have responded to the question whether they have achieved 5 or more GCSE and equivalent including English and Math; this measurement is used as to indicate academic performance where those who said yes are coded as 1 and those who haven't achieved this level of qualification coded as 0. Because LSYPE is started collecting data from the age of 13 some earlier indicators of cognitive abilities is not covered in the survey. However, the study is linked with the National Pupil Database which records pupils' academic performance at key stage 2 and key stage 3 which allows the control for prior attainment. This is a continuous variable and for this study the result of key stage 2 average point score using fine grading is built into the estimations.

Among other factors affecting young people's higher participation, aspiration is evidenced to be very important (Schoon et al 2010; Gutman et al 2012, Yates et al 2010); this also is discussed in detail in the theory chapter where it is explained how this research is treating aspiration variable. LSYPE asks young people about the likelihood of them applying for university at 13 when cohort members are still in school which is a good indicator of their intentions after graduating from school and a measurement of aspiration. Those who are very likely or fairly likely to attend university are coded 1 and labelled as high aspiration and those who think there is a little or no chance they go to university are coded 0 and labelled as low aspiration.

7.1.3 Learning environment

In this category of measurements the environment where young people learn key skills and capabilities are presented. The most important variable of interest here is the activities pupils got involved in while at school which is used as a proxy of widening participation programs since they are not directly covered in LSYPE (the rationale behind this is discussed in the previous section). The types of activities asked by LSYPE and relevant to this research include career talk with Connexions advisor, mentoring and work placements. It is assumed by this research that what LSYPE means by work placements is a typical 1-2 weeks work experience at a professional workplace which is a very common definition used by practitioners and policy makers (UKCES 2013). As for mentoring, there are a variety of definitions across the literature but LSYPE's is a learning mentor who does not teach a specific subject and helps pupil with problems they have to do well in school. As Sanders et al. (2013) argue in their paper of mentoring program evaluation this activity need not necessarily be principally concerned with increasing attainment, but rather aspiration and the realisation by students from lower social classes that `people like me' can attend higher education institutions. Cohort members are asked to submit their participation in these activities in wave 3 when they are still in school; the variables are binary where yes is coded 1 and no as 0.

The second variable looked into in this section is school type. It is evidenced that "attending better schools" is linked to better labour market outcomes after graduation (Dustman et al. 2012). This could be potentially due to the fact that Independent schools spend more in providing first hand experiences for students (Le Gallais and Hatcher 2014; Norris and Francis 2014) in order to better prepare them for the world outside school. This type of schools also have better access to networks which consequently allows them to create a range of activities with less limitations. The type of education institution young person attended is asked in wave 4 where respondents can select between maintained (coded as 0) and independent (coded as 1).

7.1.4 The Outcome variables

Participation in higher education is the key outcome in this analysis. Cohort members are asked in wave 7 (age 19/20) whether they are in university, applied for university and waiting or didn't apply. Then LSYPE created a derived variable based on activity history of young people and their response to this question that is a dummy of university participation. The binary variable is coded 1 where respondents entered HE and 0 if not. The impact of work-related learning, family background and personal agency on the likelihood of entering university will be investigated in the next chapter.

In addition to the analysis mentioned above, it is possible to test whether work-related learning programs would change young people's expectation to attend university with and without background variables in place, as described in the theory chapter. In wave 3 when individuals are 15 LSYPE asks about their intentions after year 11 which is a 2-category variable where young people report whether they want to stay on in full time education (coded as 1) or leave (coded as 0). This variable is used, as suggested by Asby and Schoon (2010), as an indicator of education expectation which is evidenced to be correlated to better academic achievements post-16.

7.2 THE BRITISH COHORT STUDY 1970

Based on the conceptual model described in the previous section, the categories used to build the estimation model are applied again for BCS70 and to extract suitable measurements in 1980's. BCS70 and LSYPE have some indicators in common. However there are instances that the variable is measured differently or a new indicator should be replaced with the ones used in LSYPE. This is explained in detail in the following subsection.

7.2.1 Socio-economic backgrounds

Father social class is used to introduce the parental social class into the model. Similar to LSYPE analysis, this variable is measured using the Registrar General's measure of social class defined according to job status and the associated education, prestige (Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys (OPCS 1980) or Lifestyle (March 1986); it represents eight different classes including parents who are still students and dead. This study excludes the student and dead category, as it is a very small group of parents coming from that class and it could potentially skew the result in case of extreme cases. The coding is an increasing order where 1 is the highest social class and 6 is the lowest. Basic demographic information is extracted from birth, age 5, 10 and 16 sweeps including gender (coded similar to LSYPE) and ethnicity. Ethnicity is based on a parental ethnicity and coded as 0 when they are a non-whit/mixed-race family and 1 if coming from white background.

Financial stability is reflected in the estimation model by comparing families who received state benefit (coded as 1) in different forms with families who have enough income to be independent of government aid (coded as 0). This variable is derived base on the information families provided in 1976; the types of benefits included unemployment, housing, income supplement, one-parent, sickness and other supplementary benefits. The questionnaire also asks about the type of house

families live in; a variable is created based on the data gathered to measure the effect of living in council houses versus private property.

Part of this category of variables is the home environment cohort members brought up in. As shown by Melhuish et al. (2008) the influence of aspects of home environments upon achievement at school is grand and it could last for years after the school entrance age. This important variable is not measured in LSYPE since it is not a birth cohort but it is applied in the models built for BCS data. British cohort offers a wide range of home learning environment which could control for the affect of young people exposure to a healthy environment including number of days watching TV after 6pm, number of days the child read to in a week time and mother's interest in child education. The first two measurements come in numerical format, which does not require coding. Mother's interest in child education compare the families who are very interested and involved to those who have no interest in their kids' education. A dummy variable is created to use this control where the reference group is those who have no interest in their child education.

7.2.2 Individual characteristics

For academic ability, unlike LSYPE were a more granulated academic achievement is offered, in this dataset Math score at age 16 is used. There is strong evidence showing there is a statistically significant correlation between math ability and later academic success (Aughinbaugh 2012; Parker et al 2013; Schoon et al 2010). BCS1970 reported the test results according to the scoring system in 1986 where individuals could select from an 8 options including O level[13] grade a, b, c (or CSE 1), d (or CSE 2), e (or CSE 3), CSE 4 and CSE 5. This variable also indicates students who failed the exam. Dissimilar to LSYPE prior school attainment is not measured in British Cohort Dataset; instead at age 5 cohort members are tested for cognitive abilities using Human Drawing Test[14] and the result of that is used to control for cognitive advantage. This is a continuous variable and does not require coding; the smarter kids record higher test scores. Unlike LSYPE, The British Cohort Study does not ask about young people's aspiration for university attendance at earlier ages. However, there is a variable which measures young people aspiration for a career which needs a degree at age 16. This variable could partly capture

[13] The General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level, also called O level, is an academic qualification. Introduced in 1951, the O level would act as a pathway to the new A-level (Advanced Level), in England. Later the complementary and more vocational Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) to offer qualifications in non-academic subjects. The O-Level and CSE were replaced in the United Kingdom, in 1988, by the GCSE exams (http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2482534/GCSE-A-G-grades-abolished-exam-revamp.html)

[14] Draw-A-Man test known as Human Drawing Test is devised by Goodenough (1926) to assess children's creativity, mental age and visual-motor intellectual maturity by coding features of their drawing of a man (Goodenough, 1926; Knoff, 1990). Points were assigned according to the presence of particular attributes such as ears; the quality of the drawing, for example how the lines meet and whether they are rigid; and the proportionality of the head, feet, hands, etc. (Goodenough, 1926).

aspects of aspiration related to higher education and is applied in the estimation models built in this research. The measurement is completely different to what used in LSYPE but enables some consistency throughout the interpretation comparing to a model, which excludes aspiration when using BCS. This question is designed in a way where students respond if a career requiring degree was their first choice, joint first choice or not. For the purpose of this analysis, the variable is recoded those who thought of getting a job requiring a degree as their first choice or joint first choice into one category (coded as 1); those who said they might choose this type of career and those who said no are coded as 0.

7.2.3 Learning environment

To allow a fairer comparison between LSYPE and BCS generation this study uses similar engagement activities including workplace visits, work experience and career talk with outside speakers. Similar to LSYPE it is assumed that the definition of work placement is a typical 1-2 weeks work experience at a professional workplace (UKCES 2013). Workplace visit is not unpacked by BCS and is not explicitly defined; however in this analysis it is assumed that this activity involves a visit of professional setting, which could also be a university campus. Unlike LSYPE career talk is not specifically defined; in BCS young people are asked whether they had career talk with people from outside schools which could include employers, university ambassadors and so on. Cohort members are asked at age 16 to record their attendance in these activities by responding to a binary question (yes=1, no=0). Another proxy used in LSYPE to compare students learning environment is school type. In BCS this variable is generated using teacher's survey in 1986. During that period a teacher's strike affected the response rate largely and the sample size would decrease considerably; therefore this study is excluding school type from the analysis.

7.2.4 Outcome variable

Cohort members are asked at age 16 whether they have plans to continue education post 18. If they said yes then they are asked where they want to continue. This variable presents four option including university/polytechnic, teacher training, technical college and Art College. This analysis derived a binary variable based on the individual's responses; those who selected to go to university are the group of interest and coded as 1 and the rest of the respondents are coded as 0 as they are planning to go to elsewhere. Using age 26 data in 1996 it is also possible to test whether the work-related learning activities increases the likelihood of cohort members holding a degree; this information is obtained by asking people what is their highest qualification achieved at age 26. The responses then

are coded into a different variable in order to compare people who achieved a degree with individuals holding any qualification less than a degree.

Additionally, the impact of work-related learning on student's education expectation is investigated using a question BCS asks from young people: whether they want to stay in education from September 1986 in any form or leave school. This study generates a binary variable based on the responses to this question to compare those who expect to stay in full time education (coded 1) or quit studying post 16 (coded 0).

8 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis is conducted through the SPSS quantitative software version 21 package, which allows for a comprehensive data analysis techniques. Based on the Extended Developmental-Contextual model discussed earlier, the variables are defined and the data is collected from BCS70 and LSYPE. The use of the cohort studies in recent research in the field of social sciences suggests that they allow meaningful proxy tests. In this study, the researcher hopes, with the use of the selected data from cohort studies, to show whether there are positive significant relationships between first-hand teenage exposure to the progression pathways – of the character of interventions championed by New Labour – and adult returns to educational investment. Underlying the contrasting approaches of New Labour and the Coalition are different models of human motivation, education and the labour market. In doing so, the research builds estimation equations; these equations estimate the associations of the variables of interest referred to them later on as estimation models.

Since the outcome variable is a dichotomous or binary (whether or not cohort members attended or applied for university) logistic regression is applied to report the significance as well as the likelihood of the impact having attended work-related activities. Additionally, considering this study is interested in understanding the effect of background variables in predicting university attendance, a multiple regression analysis is more appropriate comparing to basic cross-tabulations of the measurements. SPSS reports the Wald Statistics when running logistic regressions to estimate the parameters. The Wald test is a parametric statistical test; a relationship between data items can be described as a model with parameters to be estimated from a sample, this test can be applied to investigate the true value of the parameter based on the sample estimate. Using the correspondent value of the test, P-value can be calculated i.e. the probability of finding the observed results when the null hypothesis holds true. The null hypothesis in this research is that there is a positive and significant relationship

between the participation of school engagement activities and university attendance, all other factors being constant. P-value helps understanding the significance of the results which will be used in this research mainly to report the relationships between the variables (Field 2000).

However, when the raw relationship between the outcome variable and some predictive variables is being studied a cross-tabulation is occasionally applied. Cross-tabulation is a statistical tool that is used to explore and describe the relationship between two categorical data. Categorical data is the type of data or variables that are separated into different categories and are exclusive from one another (Field 2000). In order to understand the significance of the association between two categorical variables different statistical tests are commonly used which will be explained in the analysis chapters.

The next two chapters are dedicated to explain the sample obtained, descriptive statistics and to present the results of the logistic regression analysis for LSYPE and British Cohort Studies.

Chapter 5: Analysis I- LSYPE

1 Investigation of the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England

This chapter is going to present the analysis of the LSYPE data. At first descriptive statistics about the key variable of interest is shown in addition to the background variables applied in building the model.

2 Descriptive statistics

At age 19/21, which is the latest sweep of the LSYPE, available cohort members reported on whether they had 'applied for HE and were already in university', 'applied and will start next year', 'applied and are waiting for the offer' or 'not applied to attend university'. Those who reported being already in university or planning to attend are grouped together for the purpose of this analysis.

Table 5-1 Percentage attending HE or applied and waiting

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Not applying	4209	48.5
	Applied or attending	4467	51.5
	Total	8676	100.0
Missing			
	System	7443	
	Total	7446	
Total		16122	

The total number who responded to this question is 8,676 from which 51.5 percent are either in university or attending next year and applied already and waiting for the result. Those who haven't applied and chose a different route to adulthood are the comparison group in the following analysis and are coded 0.

Young people were also asked at age 16 about their experience at school with regard to work-related learning and their understanding of the world of work. LSYPE measures this through few variables where cohort members report their activities including work experience, mentoring and career talks with Connexions advisors. Table 5-2 summarises the frequencies. Approximately 70 percent of the students attended career talks with Connexion advisors which was, as mentioned in previous chapter, a scheme provided to schools and was in great demand. LSYPE shows only 38.2 percent of the cohort members did work experience despite the State's emphasis on young people attending work experience before graduating from school.

Table 5-2 Summary of activities attended at age 16

	Attended	Didn't attend	Total number of respondents
Work placement	38.2	61.8	12,284
Mentoring	26.8	73.2	10,343
Career talks	69	31	12,230

Mentoring was also not very welcomed by young people and schools; only 26.8 percent of the respondents attended.

These variables are the building blocks of the estimation model with which the direct relationship of attending work/HE-related learning programs at school and university attendance could be investigated. However in this chapter the role of social factors are also going to be tested; therefore it is necessary to profile the cohort members in terms of their socio-economic factors and demographics. This allows making more solid conclusion from the regression analysis later as well as helping the model to control for factors that could drive HE attendance aside from participation in the above-mentioned activities.

Table 5-3 represents the summary of the set of background variables that were explained in depth in the previous chapter. The majority of the cohort member's main parent works in three groups including lower managerial and professional occupations (23.1%), semi-routine occupations (19.4%) and intermediate occupations (13.2). The sample also has approximately equal number of female and male, 49.1 and 50.9 percent respectively. 67 percent of the sample is coming from the white ethnicity category. Using free school meal as an indicator of disadvantage shows only a small proportion of the sample was in receipt of it (16.7%). Measuring performance at school also shows from 12,040 respondents approximately equal number of cohort members who did and did not achieve 5 or more

A*-C GCSEs including Math and English (48.4% and 51.6% respectively); this variable is used to separate those who are academically more able and are more likely to attend university based on their own decision and interest (agency factor) regardless of school interventions. Additionally the average point score at key stage 2 is introduced to the model for the similar reason; the average score is 26.8. The frequency table also illustrates that from the 15,455 who responded to the question: the majority of the parents were involved in their child's education (71.4%).

Regarding the school type, the range of answer options available to the respondents includes maintained, independent, FE colleges, Sixth Form colleges, Academies/ City technology colleges, Agricultural/ Horticultural colleges, Art/Performing/ Design colleges and others. To compare those who were in state and independent schools two separate categories are allocated to them in school type variable. The third category belongs to FE college students as 33 percent of the sample is attending FE colleges and it cannot be excluded from the school. The rest of the options are represented in the "other" category. When analysing the data through the regression method this variable is not included since the options couldn't be divided to state and private schools; this would reduce the sample size to a great extent. This is reflected in the interpretation of the data and its limitation later on when discussing the limitation of the data.

Table 5-3 Summary of background variables

			%
	Main Parent social class (N=15133)	Higher managerial and professional occupations	5.5
		Lower managerial and professional occupations	23.1
		Intermediate occupations	13.2
		Small employers and own account workers	7.9
		Lower supervisory and technical occupations	8.1
		Semi-routine occupations	19.4
		Routine occupations	11.7
		Never worked/long term unemployed	11
	Gender (N=15,431)	Female	49.1
		Male	50.9
	Ethnicity (N=15,744)	White	67
		Non-white	33
	Free school meal received (11,816)	Yes	16.7
		No	83.3
	Parental involvement in child education (N=15,454)	Not involved	28.5
		Very involved	71.4
	Achieved 5 or more A*-C GCSE and equivalent in Eng. & Math (N=12,040)	Yes	48.4
		No	51.6
	KS2 average point score (N=7,684)	Min	15
		Max	36
		Mean	26.8
	School type (N=5,456)	Maintained	33.5
		Independent	3.5
		FE Colleges	33.4
		Other (including sixth form, academies and other colleges)	29.7
	HE aspiration at age 13 (N=7,963)	Likely to attend HE later on	62.8
		Unlikely to attend HE later on	37.2

3 WHO ATTENDED WORK-RELATED LEARNING PROGRAMS?

It is important to understand the background of those who attended the work-related activities in school; it will generate a clearer picture when interpreting the result of the analysis later on in this chapter. This examination focuses only on parental social class, free school meal, performance at school at age 16 and education aspiration at age 13 as main indicators of background factors. In doing so, the Chi-square statistical test is used, as the variables under investigations are categorical variables and shows the relationship between two categorical data. The P-value using the value of Chi-square test is then reported to present the strength of the relationship. When P-value is less than 5% the relationship is identified as significant at 5% and if the P-value is less than 10% the relationship is reported significant at 10%.

3.1 WORK EXPERIENCE

Table 5-4 demonstrates that those who are coming from most privileged background showed lower participation rate in placements. When looking at the lowest social classes, it is shown that young people are more likely to have attended work experience. This correlation is statistically significant at 5% based on the Chi-square statistics. When analysing the relationship between free school meals and work experience attendance the result shows those who have been in receipt of free school meal are more likely to complete placements (45.1% versus 37.1%). This relationship is also highly statistically significant at 5%. Young people who are academically more able are less likely to have participated in work experience. The correlation between the two variables is statistically significant at 5%. Last but not least, education aspiration at age 13 is associated with attendance in work experience and the result shows young people with lower aspiration are more likely to partake work experience than their peers with higher aspiration about education after year 11.

A conclusion could be made from the cross-tabulation in table 5-4 that work experience is mostly common among students who are less successful at school and come from more disadvantaged families. This is in fact an interesting finding; the programs designed for widening access and promoted and supported by the previous government aimed to target this type of student (explained in policy chapter) in order to increase their aspiration and achievement; motivating them to try their chances to attend university and not leaving education after compulsory education.

Table 5-4: Cross-tabulation of work experience and selected background factors

			Work experience	
			Yes	No
	Main Parent social class (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Higher managerial and professional occupations	28.7%	71.3%
		Lower managerial and professional occupations	33.4%	66.6%
		Intermediate occupations	35.8%	64.2%
		Small employers and own account workers	38.3%	61.7%
		Lower supervisory and technical occupations	34.8%	65.2%
		Semi-routine occupations	39.9%	60.1%
		Routine occupations	41.9%	58.1%
		Never worked/long term unemployed	42.5%	57.5%
	Free school meal (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Yes	45.1%	54.9%
		No	37.1%	62.9%
	Higher performance age 16 (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Yes	33.3%	66.7%
		No	41.8%	58.2%
	HE aspiration age 13 (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Likely to attend HE later on	32.8%	67.2%
		Unlikely to attend HE later on	42.6%	57.4%

3.2 CAREER TALKS WITH CONNEXION ADVISOR

Similar to work experience, talking to a career advisor is associated with selected background factors in order to profile students who attended this activity. The results are presented in Table 5-5.

Table 5-5 Cross-tabulation of career talks and selected background factors

		Career talk	
		Yes	No
Main Parent social class (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Higher managerial and professional occupations	56.5%	43.5%
	Lower managerial and professional occupations	62.3%	37.7%
	Intermediate occupations	68.8%	31.2%
	Small employers and own account workers	69.2%	30.8%
	Lower supervisory and technical occupations	74.3%	25.7%
	Semi-routine occupations	72.8%	27.2%
	Routine occupations	73.3%	26.7%
	Never worked/long term unemployed	72.2%	27.8%
Free school meal (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Yes	76.4%	23.6%
	No	70.2%	29.8%
Higher performance age 16 (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Yes	65.3%	34.7%
	No	74.6%	25.4%
HE aspiration age 13 (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Likely to attend HE later on	64%	36%
	Unlikely to attend HE later on	74.4%	25.6%

From the parental social class point of view, those students whose parents have routine occupations or who are long term unemployed are more likely to have attended career talks in school and this relationship is statistically significant at 5%. Very similar to the work experience, career talks appear to be very common among students who received free school meal; 76.4 percent of those who received FSM at some point in their education participated in career talks with connexion advisors. Also 74.6 percent of less academically able who didn't achieve 5 or more GCSE A-C* including Math and English students attended career talks comparing to their peers who achieved better results at their GCSE exams. 74.4% Pupils with lower levels of education aspiration at age 13 have also been part

of a career talk with connexion advisor. These correlations are all statistically significant at 5%.

3.3 MENTORING

The association between mentoring and background factors is shown in table 5-6.

Table 5-6 Cross-tabulation of mentoring and selected background factors

		Mentoring	
		Yes	No
Main Parent social class (P-value:0. 00 using Chi-square statistics)	Higher managerial and professional occupations	21.4%	78.6%
	Lower managerial and professional occupations	21.9%	78.1%
	Intermediate occupations	28.0%	72.0%
	Small employers and own account workers	26.6%	73.4%
	Lower supervisory and technical occupations	27.3%	72.7%
	Semi-routine occupations	27.6%	72.4%
	Routine occupations	30.8%	69.2%
	Never worked/long term unemployed	35.4%	64.6%
Free school meal (P-value:0. 00 using Chi-square statistics)	Yes	34.7%	65.3%
	No	25.5%	74.5%
Higher performance age 16 (P-value:0. 00 using Chi-square statistics)	Yes	17.2%	82.8%
	No	35.1%	64.9%
HE aspiration age 13 (P-value:0. 00 using Chi-square statistics)	Likely to attend HE later on	21.6%	78.4%
	Unlikely to attend HE later on	34.2%	65.8%

The relationship between mentoring and the background variables presented above follows the same pattern as the other two activities; it is also highly statistically significant at 5%. The proportion of

students who attended mentoring increases as the social class decreases.

It appears from the analysis that these activities were either designed by the school to encourage young people from working class backgrounds to seek a range of opportunities outside school. Therefore this could be perceived as an indicator of both agency and structure. However, work-related learning programs including work experience and career talks were the focus of policy during 2004-2010 which specified some experience of these types of activities before graduation from school (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2004)) during that period and students did not play a part in deciding to attend which eliminates the agency angle of this activity. Career talks were also organised by the Connexions which was funded and managed through local education authorities and arranged initially by schools with voluntarily follow up sessions with the advisor (House of Commons: Education Committee 2013[15]). This is also very informative as schools would have arranged the career talks originally and students' choice may have played a relatively smaller role in it. In the case of mentoring no conclusion could be made as there is no definition by LSYPE nor its technical reports that how this activity was arranged, whether student chooses to attend or the staff facilitate it for selected students, which could create scepticism when ultimately testing the effect of it on university attendance.

If these programs are mainly arranged for students with low aspirations and low achievement coming from less advantaged families in order to help them consider alternative education pathways than those they might expect to follow, were there in fact effective? In the next section this will be tested using the data gathered from LSYPE survey.

However, before the evaluation of the engagement activity at school and their effect on higher education participation, some investigation is implemented to show whether the conclusion made in the theory and policy chapters regarding the influence of aspiration and school performance is valid using LSYPE data in addition to the impact of social class on these two variables. Table 5-7 looks at the proportion of young people who performed well at school (using the measurement explained in the methodology chapter) i.e. those who achieve 5 or more GCSE A*-C including Math and English and attended university.

[15] Career guidance for young people: The impact of the New Duty on schools, seventh report of session 2010-13 Vol 1: Report, together with formal minutes, The Stationary office 2013

Table 5-7: Cross-tabulation of school performance and HE attendance

N= 6,604 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-Square test		Achieved 5 or more GCSE A*-C including Math and English	Didn't achieve 5 or more GCSE A*-C including Math and English
	Applied or attended university	66.9%	14.8%
	Didn't apply	33.1%	85.2%
	Total	3,845	4,030

The Table above shows a statistically significant relationship between school attainment and university participation. Those who scored higher in exams (achieved 5 or more GCSEs A*-C including Math and English) are more likely to be in university at age 19/20. But the question is whether parental social class plays a role in determining what young people achieve in their exams at age 16. Table 5-8 presents the cross-tabulation of parental social class and school performance to answer this question.

Table 5-8: Cross-tabulation of school performance and parental social class

N= 7,645 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-Square test		Achieved 5 or more GCSE A*-C including Math and English	Didn't achieve 5 or more GCSE A*-C including Math and English
	Higher Managerial and professional occupations	8.6%	3.4%
	Lower managerial and professional occupations	33%	17.2%
	Intermediate occupations	17.2%	13.3%
	Small employers and own account workers	8%	7.1%
	Lower supervisory and technical occupations	5.8%	10.7%
	Semi-routine occupations	18.2%	22.2%
	Routine occupations	6.2%	17.5%
	Never worked/long term unemployed	3%	8.5%

The cross-tabulation above demonstrates the strong relationship between family social class and

school performance. Students from higher social classes are more likely to do well in exams comparing to their peers coming from more working class backgrounds. Through these two tables it is observed that parental social class could, via its impact on school attainment, change young people's destination. Despite the higher proportion of young people from higher parental social classes performing well at school, there is a percentage of students from lower social classes who also receive good grades (27.4% in total across the three lowest classes in table 5-8), but do they select to go to university? From those young people who belong to the lowest three classes (subsample of 2,988 individuals) 72 percent decided to apply or attend university, data presented in table 5-9.

Table 5-9: Cross-tabulation of school performance and HE attendance for the bottom three social class in LSYPE (semi-routine and routine occupation and unemployed)

N= 2,910 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-Square test	Achieved 5 or more GCSE A*-C including Math and English	Didn't achieve 5 or more GCSE A*-C including Math and English
Applied or attended university	72%	28%
Didn't apply	20.1%	79.9%

This is in line with the work of Goldthorpe and Jackson (2008); they argue that if young people from working class manage to perform well at school they most probably proceed to higher education. It is very interesting that 28 percent of students from the lowest social classes who didn't perform well at school using LSYPE measurement attended or applied to attend university. It is not possible to track their pathway to university in LSYPE dataset, however, one could assume these are students who attended lower quality universities with less brighter career prospects, they applied and might be unsuccessful to enter and also might have got into higher education through the last minute clearing processes.

A similar approach is taken with regard to aspiration to go to university while at school. Using the same variable explained above, it is tested to see whether higher aspiration at age 13 could affect pupils' decision to seek to participate in higher education n, and if yes, whether parental social class influences the level of aspiration. Table 5-10 shows the result of the cross-tabulation between aspiration for university attendance at age 13 and participation at age 19/20.

Table 5-10: Cross-tabulation of HE aspiration at age 13 and participation at age 19/20

N= 7,959 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-Square test	High HE aspiration	Low HE aspiration
Applied or attended university	63.2%	7.7%
Didn't apply	36.8%	92.3%
Total	2,962	4,997

The result of the above analysis shows students who were inspired to go to university at earlier age and found it very likely to enrol for higher education were most probably attend university later on. Almost 92 percent of pupils with low aspiration did not apply for higher education. The relationship is highly statistically significant (P-value= 0.00). This confirms what was discussed by the social scientists who believed aspiration plays a key role in determining whether young people go to university or not. The extra piece of analysis presented in table 5-11, however, illustrates the relationship between HE aspiration and parental social class to verify the impact of class on aspiration.

Table 5-11: Cross-tabulation of parental social class and HE aspiration at age 13

N= 7,725 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-Square test	High HE aspiration	Low HE aspiration
Higher Managerial and professional occupations	8.9%	3%
Lower managerial and professional occupations	31.4%	17.1%
Intermediate occupations	15.6%	14.4%
Small employers and own account workers	7.7%	7.1%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	6.5%	10.5%
Semi-routine occupations	16.7%	24.7%
Routine occupations	7.6%	17.8%
Never worked/long term unemployed	5.5%	5.4%

The relationship between parental social class and HE aspiration is statistically significant (at 5%) and the pattern, similar to school performance, shows that students with parents from higher social

classes (for instance the top three groups in the table above) are more likely to be inspired to go to university. Looking at the bottom three social classes the proportion of students with lower aspiration for higher education is in fact higher. On the other hand, across these three classes, those who still held a high level of aspiration for HE at age 13 almost 89 percent applied for university later on, data presented in table 5-12. This, compared to the effect of social class on school performance, demonstrates that the indirect effect of social class on university participation through level of aspiration is even stronger. However, if young people from lower social classes perform well at school and maintain a high level of aspiration they have higher chances of participating in higher education.

Table 5-12: Cross-tabulation of HE aspiration at age 13 and participation at age 19/20 for the bottom three social classes in LSYPE

N= 2,826 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-Square test	High HE aspiration	Low HE aspiration
Applied or attended university	89.2%	10.8%
Didn't apply	35%	65%

In summary, according to the analysis, parental social class influences the level of aspiration and school performance of young people while they are at school. 89 percent of students from the bottom three social classes with high aspiration for higher education attended or applying to attend. The proportion of students from the three lowest social classes who performed well at school and pursued higher education is 72 percent. This shows the level of parental social class influence is larger on aspiration than school performance but as significant. These two variables are highly predictive of university participation as shown in the analysis above and their correlations are significant.

Going back to the main research question, the following section presents the impact of engagement activities on university participation. The subsequent investigation then could be used to test whether schools could partly help modify the effect of social class on young people decision to pursue higher education at university.

4 IMPACT OF INTERVENTIONS ON UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION

To study the impact of school engagement activities on university participation, as explained in the methodology chapter, logistic regression is used. To report the results of the logistic regression researchers commonly use the SPSS outputs for odds ratio (Field 2000). In logistic regression the

coefficient (effect size or unit change) is produced in Logarithm form (found in the first column of each logistic regression tables shown as 'B'); therefore, in order to calculate the actual unit change one could convert this column to the exponent of the coefficient (called Exp(B) in SPSS outputs) (found in the column called 'Changes in the odds' in the following tables). To interpret the results of the logistic regression, this research uses either the numbers in the 'changes in odds' column, which is the exponent of the coefficients, or the odds ratio reported in the final column in each regression table presented in the following sections. Odds ratio is a measurement of association between an outcome variable and explanatory variables; it represents the odds that an outcome will occur compared to the odds of the outcome not occurring, given the absence or presence of the predictors. When odds ratio is greater than 1 the predictor is associated with higher odds of the outcome and when it is less than 1 the predictor variable is associated with lower odds of outcome occurrence.

In addition, to find out about models' fitness in regression analysis researchers report R-squared[16]. The closer this percentage to 100 the better fitted is the model. This statistical measurement is replaced by Pseudo-R squared. There are debates about whether this is the appropriate measurement of fitness in the logistic regression (for instance, Hosmer, Lemshow and Sturdivant 2013). There is another measurement that is used in logistic regression is the Percentage Predicted Correct (PPC) which gives the overall percent of cases that are correctly predicted by the model. In this research this figure is used to show the strength of the model prediction.

4.1 WORK EXPERIENCE

This activity is explained in detail in the previous section in terms of the frequency and the type of students who attended. In here, at first the direct relationship between the two variables is studied (Model 1), with no control variables in place. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 5-13[17].

Table 5-13 Logistic Regression between work experience and HE attendance

Model 1 N= 8,428 PPC: 58.8%		B	S.E.[18]	df[19]	Sig[20].	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
	Work placement	-.339	.045	1	.000	.71	0.28
	Constant	.232	.028	1	.000	0.79	0.21

[16] R-square is the statistical measure of how close the data is to the fitted regression line. In another word, it shows the goodness of regression model.
[17] The results of the analysis are all weighted using the weight the administrators provided in the data themselves. This weight is based on all individuals who responded to wave 7, which is the latest sweep of LSYPE panel data.
[18] Standard Error
[19] Degree of Freedom
[20] Significance level or P-value

Model 1 shows the odds of young people who completed work placements during school and be in HE at age 19 is 0.71 times less than those who didn't attend work experience i.e. they are 28% less likely to be at university at age 19 or have applied to attend. This relationship is highly statistically significant at 5%. However, model 1 shows merely the raw relationship with no control variables included which is not as solid as when they are introduced to the model; they could predict certain impacts on the likelihood of attending university and it is essential for this to be tested.

The set of defined control variables described in the methodology chapter are introduced in, Model 2, and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 5-14.

Table 5-14 Logistic Regression with control variables in place

Model 2 N=6,939 PPC: 80.3%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Main Parent SC	-.109	.017	1	.000	.89	0.10
Ethnicity	-1.157	.104	1	.000	.31	0.69
Gender	.163	.065	1	.012	1.17	0.17
Work placement	-.014	.068	1	.838	.98	0.02
Parents involvement	.074	.081	1	.357	1.07	0.07
Free school meal	-.228	.126	1	.071	.79	0.21
Key stage 2 performance	.102	.013	1	.000	1.10	0.10
Academic performance at 16	1.369	.084	1	.000	3.93	…
Born to single parent	-.295	.086	1	.001	.74	0.26
Education aspiration at 13	1.940	.087	1	.000	6.95	…
Constant	-3.988	.348	1	.000	.01	0.99

The relationship between work experience and HE attendance is no longer significant (P-value=0.000 to P-value=0.838); this means introducing the control variables played a crucial role in clarifying the correlation between the two variables. It appears that there are far many factors that could potentially impact the decision to attend university than just participating in work experience and these factors cannot be ignored as they mostly have significant effect on the likelihood of going to university. For instance, parental social class is a determining factor where those who are from lower levels are 10 percent less likely to be in university or applied to attend and the relationship is highly significant. Being born to single parent is another element that has high impact; those who are not born to single

parent have higher chances to attend university when they grow up and the correlation is significant at 5%. Among the background factors there are school performance and aspiration that also determine the likelihood of HE attendance. The odds of students with higher academic ability attending university is 3.93 times higher than those with lower ability and the relationship is statistically significant at 5%. Additionally, the odds of students with higher level of aspiration going to university is 6.96 times higher than those with lower aspiration towards HE at earlier ages.

It is also important to note that these background factors could only partly show the picture in terms of factors affecting individual's decision to pursue higher education. There are certainly other variables that are either not captured in this model or the survey itself, which is always part of the error term and is unavoidable. In Model 2, 80.3% of the estimated parameters are calculated correctly; the higher this percentage the better fit the estimation model is.

4.2 CAREER TALK WITH CONNEXION ADVISORS

In this section the impact of career talk on likelihood of attending university is investigated. At first it is evidenced what is the direct link between two variables and the result of this analysis is presented in Table 5-15 as Model 3.

Table 5-15 Logistic Regression between career talk and HE attendance

Model 3 N= 8,389 PPC: 52.9%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Career Talk	-.310	.047	1	.000	.73	0.27
Constant	.264	.039	1	.000	1.30	0.30

Similar to work experience, the result of the logistic regression shows career talks with a connexion advisor does not increase the likelihood of young people HE participation. Those who took part in this activity are 27 percent less likely to pursue tertiary education and the correlation is statistically significant at 5%.

Subsequently, Model 4 investigates the same relationship with control variables in place for more robust results. Table 5-16 presents the result of this analysis. The background factors used in this model is similar to Model 2 for consistency purposes.

Table 5-16 Logistic Regression with control variables in place

Model 4 N=6,907 PPC: 80.3%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Main Parent SC	-.111	.017	1	.000	.89	0.11
Ethnicity	-1.171	.104	1	.000	.31	0.69
Gender	.165	.065	1	.012	1.17	0.17
Career talk	-.050	.070	1	.477	.95	0.05
Parents involvement	.081	.081	1	.314	1.08	0.08
Free school meal	-.243	.127	1	.056	.78	0.22
Key stage 2 performance	.103	.013	1	.000	1.10	0.10
Academic performance at 16	1.371	.084	1	.000	3.93	…
Born to single parent	-.290	.086	1	.001	.74	0.26
Education aspiration at 13	1.949	.088	1	.000	7.02	…
Constant	-3.957	.354	1	.000	.01	0.99

After including the background variables the significant link between career talk and the decision to attend university disappears. Individuals' background once again proved to be very important, PPC increased from 53% to 80%. Model 4 shows that the control variables applied have very strong impact on young people's decision to go to university. Students coming from lower social classes are 11 percent more likely to leave the education before entering university and also those who received free school meal when at school are 22 percent less likely to attend HE when they graduate from school. Young people with higher academic abilities are certainly more likely to decide to go to university; the odds of students with higher aspiration to pursue higher education later on is 7.02 time higher than their peers with lower levels of aspiration. This relationship is statistically significant at 5%.

4.3 MENTORING

The direct relationship of the mentoring and the likelihood of young people going to or applying for university is presented in Table 5-17 as Model 5. Although it is mentioned previously that the nature of this activity is to some extent ambiguous, the relationship is tested in here to find an evidence of effectiveness.

Table 5-17 Logistic Regression between mentoring and HE attendance

Model 5 N= 8,389 PPC: 52.9%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Mentoring	-.789	.059	1	.000	.45	0.55
Constant	-.248	.028	1	.000	.78	0.22

Model 5, similar to other two activities, illustrates that those who have been mentored at school are less likely to going to apply or attend university later on and the correlation is statistically significant at 5%. The odds of young people with mentors going to university is 0.45 times less comparing to the odds of those who didn't have a learning mentor at school. This is a very strong link, however, it could change after including the control variables. Table 5-18, Model 5, shows the result of the logistic regression between mentoring and HE attendance after controlling for the background factors.

Table 5-18 Logistic Regression with control variables in place

Model 6 N=5,945 PPC: 79.7%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Main Parent SC	-.113	.018	1	.000	.89	0.11
Ethnicity	-1.148	.110	1	.000	.31	0.69
Gender	.160	.070	1	.022	1.17	0.17
Mentoring	-.306	.084	1	.000	.73	0.27
Parents involvement	.088	.086	1	.306	1.09	0.09
Free school meal	-.169	.133	1	.204	.84	0.16
Key stage 2 performance	.095	.014	1	.000	1.10	0.10
Academic performance at 16	1.313	.090	1	.000	3.71	…
Born to single parent	-.264	.091	1	.004	.76	0.24
Education aspiration at 13	1.888	.093	1	.000	6.60	…
Constant	-3.676	.379	1	.000	.02	0.98

Even though the controls are in place, the relationship is significant at 5%. This shows that mentoring did not at all increase the likelihood of young people going or applying for university, even after controlling for background factors. The odds of students with mentoring experience and attending HE is 0.73 times less than the odds of students with no mentoring going to university. This relationship is statistically significant at 5%. This is perhaps due to the fact that students with severe aspiration and

performance problems were dedicated a mentoring session to, as described by LSYPE. Model 6 revealed important background factors again. Parental social class, education aspiration at age 13, academic performance at age 10 and 16 and demographics have a direct and strong relationship on university attendance. For instance, the odds of female students going to university is 1.17 times higher than male students and the relationship is statistically significant at 5%.

The results of the above regressions are more or less surprisingly similar to each other; except from the significance level, the activities are not increasing the odds of students deciding to go to university.

In the estimation models above education aspiration at age 13 is included to better understand the prediction power of aspiration on HE attendance in the logistic regression. However there might be a case where young people are extremely inspired to attend university but their expectations are not aligned with reality. The difference between the two concepts is explained in great length in the theory chapter and defined explicitly in the methodology chapter that how LSYPE measures both. In the next section, education expectation is the studied outcome variable and the effect of school-mediated engagement activities on young people expectations is evaluated.

5 IMPACT OF INTERVENTIONS ON EDUCATION EXPECTATION AT AGE 15

At first, this section explores whether there is a correlation between students' education expectation at age 15 and actual university participation. Subsequently, after finding the relationship between these two variables, the impact of engagement activities at school on education expectation is investigated; if the engagement activities had a positive impact on young people's expectations, they could act as a catalyst which indirectly affect their decision to attend university.

LSYPE asks the cohort members at age 15 about their intensions after year 11 (after compulsory education). This research uses this variable to measure expectation, which is different from aspiration and also measured differently. Table 5-19 presents students perception of their future education pathway.

Table 5-19 Frequency of education expectations at age 15

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Staying in Full time education	5805	87.6
	Leaving full time education	822	12.4
	Total	6627	100.0

From those who responded 87.6 percent expect to continue with full time education in future versus 12.4 percent who plan to leave full time education after year 11; which is still a considerable proportion of young people in 2005/06. The more crucial evidence to find is to whether this expectation affects the likelihood of individual's participating HE. The answer is presented in table 5-20 which shows the actual conversion rate between those who stayed in full time education and attended university later on

Table 5-20 Cross-tabulation of HE attendance and education expectation at age 15

P-value: 0.00	Staying in full time education	Leaving full time education	Total number of respondents
Not attending HE	79.7%	20.3%	3911
Attending/applied for HE	98.8%	1.2%	4239
Total	5801	822	6623

As shown in Table 5-20 those whose intention is to continue with full time education after year 11 are in fact more likely to be in university at age 19/20. Almost 99 percent of young people who plan to stay in full time education choose the university route into early adulthood instead of other pathways. This relationship is highly statistically significant at 5%. This shows that education expectation is in fact an important factor that could potentially predict the likelihood of one deciding to attend tertiary education. For this reason, this research is going to investigate whether engagement activities could change young people's education expectation hence their plans to attend or apply for university. But before assessing the impact of these schemes on expectation, it is crucial to see whether parental social class affects young people education expectation. Table 5-21 show the trend across different social classes.

Table 5-21: Cross-tabulation between parental social class and education expectation at age 15

N= 6,433 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-square test		Stay in Full time education	Leave full time education
	Higher Managerial and professional occupations	7.1%	3.2%
	Lower managerial and professional occupations	27.1%	15.5%
	Intermediate occupations	15.6%	14.8%
	Small employers and own account workers	7.4%	8.1%
	Lower supervisory and technical occupations	7.9%	11.6%
	Semi-routine occupations	18.9%	26.2%
	Routine occupations	10.7%	16.2%
	Never worked/long term unemployed	5.3%	4.4%

The above cross-tabulation shows that those students coming from higher social classes according to LSYPE, are more likely to expect to stay in full time education after year 11. This perhaps could be the result of parental encouragement and expectation to value full time education and their familiarity with the traditional routes to adulthood. This correlation is statistically significant.

In the next section the relationship between the three activities discussed before and education expectation is investigated and presented thoroughly.

5.1 WORK EXPERIENCE

In here the hypothesis that work experience could have positive effect on education expectation is tested in two steps: direct relationship and with control variables in place.

Model 1.1 is the result of the logistic regression between the two variables on interest with no background variables included in the estimation.[21]

[21] In this analysis a new weight is applied provided by LSYPE administrators as the outcome variable is now from wave 3 and the new weight used here is necessary.

Table 5-22 Logistic Regression between education expectation and work experience

Model 1.1 N=6,603, PPC: 87.6%		B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
	Work experience	-.409	.075	1	.000	.66	0.34
	Constant	2.116	.049	1	.000	8.29	…

The above analysis shows similar result to the regression between work experience and HE attendance. The odds of attending placements and expecting to stay in full time education is 0.66 times less than the odds of not participating. This relationship is statistically significant at 5%. After controlling for the same set of background variables applied in the previous section, the results are modified. The odds of attending work experience and expecting to stay in full time education is 0.85 times less than the odds of not participating in work experience and planning to continue full time education. This relationship is statistically significant at 10% which means the strength of the relationship is decreased after controlling for background factors.

Table 5-23 Logistic Regression with controls in place

Model 1.2 N=5,666 PCC: 87.1%		B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
	Main Parent Social class	-.006	.024	1	.798	.99	0.01
	Ethnicity	-1.051	.270	1	.000	.35	0.65
	Gender	1.041	.098	1	.000	2.83	…
	Work experience	-.159	.093	1	.088	.85	0.15
	Parents involvement	.075	.124	1	.547	1.07	0.07
	Free school meal	-.155	.141	1	.269	.85	0.15
	Key stage 2 performance	.011	.014	1	.431	1.01	0.01
	Academic performance at 16	.562	.139	1	.000	1.75	0.75
	Born to single parent	.048	.111	1	.669	1.04	0.04
	Education aspiration at 13	3.071	.169	1	.000	21.57	…
	Constant	-1.123	.461	1	.015	.32	0.68

The relationship between socio-economic factors and education expectation is of high importance. However, few of the variables applied in the estimation Model 1.2 are strongly predictive of the likelihood of young people expecting to participate HE including ethnicity, gender, academic performance at age 16 and HE aspiration at age 13. For instance, the odds of female students expecting to stay in full time education after the age of 16 is higher than male students and the relationship is statistically significant at 5%. Also the odds of having higher HE aspiration at early ages and planning to stay in full time education post-16 is extremely higher than the odds of having lower level of aspiration. Parental social class appears to have no significant relationship with education expectation under this estimation model.

5.2 CAREER TALK WITH CONNEXION ADVISORS

Career talk with advisors and its impact on education expectation is explored in this section and the result of the regression model between two variables without control variables is shown in Table 5-24 as Model 2.1.

Table 5-24 Logistic regression between education expectation and career talk

Model 2.1 N= 6,569 PPC: 87.6%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Career Talk	-.473	.087	1	.000	.62	0.38
Constant	2.291	.075	1	.000	9.88	…

This model shows that career talk with an advisor has a high impact on education expectation. Those who had the opportunity to talk with a Connexion advisor are 38 percent less likely to expect themselves to stay in full time education after year 11 (age 16). This is a highly statistically significant correlation (at 5%), however, the relationship with control variables in place is modified and presented in table 5-25.

Table 5-25 Logistic Regression with controls in place.

Model 2.2 N=5,637 PPC: 87%		B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
	Main Parent Social class	-.006	.024	1	.801	.99	0.01
	Ethnicity	-1.059	.270	1	.000	.34	0.66
	Gender	1.040	.098	1	.000	2.83	…
	Career Talk	-.136	.107	1	.203	.87	0.13
	Parents involvement	.082	.124	1	.509	1.08	0.08
	Free school meal	-.161	.142	1	.254	.85	0.15
	Key stage 2 performance	.012	.014	1	.400	1.01	0.01
	Academic performance at 16	.561	.139	1	.000	1.75	0.75
	Born to single parent	.031	.112	1	.779	1.03	0.03
	Education aspiration at 13	3.077	.169	1	.000	21.68	…
	Constant	1.137	.466	1	.015	3.11	…

The odds of attending career talks and expecting to attend post-16 full time education is now 0.87 times less than the odds of not attending the career talks and staying in full time education after the age of 16, however, the relationship is no longer significant. The importance of some social backgrounds is still observed. School performance at age 16, education aspiration, gender and ethnicity are all highly effectual in predicting the education expectation of young people. For instance, those who performed well at age 16 are more likely to have the intension of staying in full time education after age 16 i.e. the odds of achieving 5 or more GCSE A-C* including Math and English and expecting to stay in post-16 full time education is 1.75 times higher than achieving lower than that and the relationship is statistically significant at 5%.

5.3 MENTORING

Last but not least the relationship between mentoring and education expectation is tested below. At first the direct effect is measured and presented in Table 5- 26 as Model 3.1.

Table 5-26 Logistic Regression between education expectation and mentoring

Model 3.1 N= 5,592 PPC: 87.2%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Mentoring	-.499	.085	1	.000	.60	0.40
Constant	2.074	.050	1	.000	7.95	…

Similar to the previous mentoring analysis and also other activities, this program did not help students' education expectation. Those who have attended mentoring are almost 40 percent less likely to expect to pursue higher education.

Table 5-27 Logistic Regression with controls in place

Model 3.2 N=4,890 PPC: 86.9%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Main Parent SC	-.010	.026	1	.706	.99	0.01
Ethnicity	-1.063	.286	1	.000	.34	0.66
Gender	1.036	.105	1	.000	2.81	…
Mentoring	.027	.106	1	.796	1.02	0.02
Parents involvement	.014	.133	1	.919	1.01	0.01
Free school meal	-.181	.151	1	.229	.83	0.17
Key stage 2 performance	.003	.015	1	.848	1.00	…
Academic performance at 16	.660	.150	1	.000	1.93	0.93
Born to single parent	.123	.120	1	.307	1.13	0.13
Education aspiration at 13	3.069	.182	1	.000	21.51	…
Constant	1.272	.497	1	.011	3.56	…

After controlling for social factors and personal attributes in Model 3.2 the strength of the relationship between mentoring and education expectation disappeared. The repeated pattern throughout the analysis of the education expectation shows that school performance at age 16, aspiration for HE,

gender and ethnicity are factors which affect students' expectation strongly. The remaining background variables proved insignificant in predicting their plans about post-16 education.

6 DISCUSSION

According to the analysis above the hypothesis formed in this research, stating engagement activities and school interventions could affect young people's intention and actual decision to attend university, is rejected. Young people who attended these types of activities are in fact less likely to attend university or expect to pursue higher education later on, regardless of the significance of this correlation. The estimation models built in the previous sections showed that interventions such as work experience, career talk with advisors and mentoring, which are to some extent representative of work/HE-related activities during school years (and used as a proxy of widening participation activities in this research), are not affecting young people's mindset about tertiary education. The result of the investigation also highlights that students who attended such programs do not belong to the group of young people coming from traditional academic backgrounds. As the cross-tabulations implemented in the previous section shows, they are mostly from less advantaged families, performing lower at exams including Math and English and they grew up with less ambition for higher education. These factors not only are observed in profiling students attending these programs but they are very important in predicting young people decision of university attendance. The analysis of background variables and HE attendance demonstrated this in the previous section. Among these factors exist elements of both agency and social structures. Parental social class, born to single parents and receiving free school meal are structural aspects that young people inherit. There are young people from working class backgrounds in this analysis who performed well at school and pursued higher education; approximately 79 percent of students coming from the lowest social classes choose to go to university. This could be the effect of institutions which potentially outweighs the influence of traditional working class culture. Additionally, the research implemented by the Institute of Employment Research for Department for Education and Employment in 2001 investigates the encouraging factors for students from lower social classes to consider HE among which is improved job and career prospects. Therefore, the hypothesis formed in the theory chapter stating that university attendance is influenced by a combination of agency and structure is validated through the analysis conducted above.

Despite the lack of evidence in the examination of LSYPE data in order to correlate work-related learning activities and higher chances of university participation, the question arise as to what the

reason could be. Since there have been research showing the positive impact of widening participation programs (see for example Morris and Rutt 2006), the results of the analysis needs further justification.

7 CONTEXTUALISING THE RESULTS

In this section the result of the LSYPE analysis is elaborated in light of the previous evidence found in the literature where a positive effect of engagement activities is traced. As discussed in the policy chapter, the evaluation of widening participation schemes designed by the New Labour government shows positive influence on aspiration and attainment, which encourages the further development and funding of such activities. However, using proxies for widening access programs from LSYPE dataset, no major impact was detected. In the following part the reason thought to potentially generate a different result comparing to the past literature is discussed.

In qualitative research conducted by Dismore (2009) to evaluate widening participation activities from young people's viewpoint, he found that older students receive more information and attend more activities compared to younger pupils. This generates the idea of a critical age for receiving accurate information about HE and life at campus. LSYPE asks this question at age 16 but one could argue that perhaps an early age intervention could lead to a better result, as older students do not have enough time to rethink their decisions although they have access to a wider range of experiences and information about the future educational and career pathways. They are also much busier preparing for final exams as the system puts so much value on the test results and they are more or less the most important aspect of HE admission and offers. Therefore, even if they have the chance to know more about HE and its environment, it's too late to undo their GCSE scores or select more relevant subjects which is more compatible with their university degree subject and so on. For instance, the report ASPIRE (2013), when evaluating the age aspiration towards science education forms, they believe the current interventions are too late. This can be expanded to other areas of work-related learning, at age 16 aspirations are formed and to some extent decisions are made and there is little can be done to affect them; especially with limited number of encounters with professionals and people who already pursued HE. Research by the ARC Network[22] (2013) provides literature which highlights the effectiveness of early intervention, in particular on the under-represented group of young people. However, unless such data exists it is impossible to test whether this is a correct

[22] Aimhigher Research and Consultancy Network

conclusion to be made or not. In the absence of more comprehensive data this hypothesis cannot be tested but it does hinder the result of the investigation conducted in this chapter.

Secondly, for some researchers, the process of widening participation constructs further social group divide. Wolf (2002), for example, argues that education is used as a means of 'ranking' individuals. In another words, individuals suffering from 'grade inflation' are the people with the lowest levels of education to begin with. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) also argue that 'academic devaluation increases the significance of social and cultural capital whilst simultaneously devaluing human capital'. This generates a concern for existing class inequality but, specifically, an over-representation of middle class students within HE (Reay et al., 2001). Archer (2006) also criticises the Government for failing to engage satisfactorily with wider social structures. One way in which government is believed to unsuccessfully engage with these inequalities is the origin of aspiration; looking at it as personality discrepancies rather than as fabricated through poverty and discrimination (Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003). Developing this topic, in the analysis implemented above through a series of cross-tabulation of background factors, school performance and activities participation, the characteristics of those attending work-related learning programs (as a proxy of widening participation activities) is profiled. They are mainly coming from less advantaged families with lower academic achievement. The idea of separating their aspirations from what they grow up with and their perception of institutional education and HE would appear to very difficult. Dismore (2009) finds a tension between students' perception of their competencies and of those required in the world of HE. So if students in these programs are already coming from lower social classes and have less aspiration and expectation to survive in university, in particular compared to their peers, the outcome of work-related learning activities, i.e. changing their minds about university participation, could be very minimal, as background factors have a large impact on how people see their futures (DCSF 2008). In summary, it is a combination of factors that could affect young people's perception of their ability to succeed in HE and attending a single program which most of its attendees are from similar backgrounds couldn't possibly have a considerable effect on how they choose their educational pathways; and this is a dispositional barrier of widening access rooted in young people habitus.

Thirdly, implementation of the work-related activities (and Aimhigher-related programs) was not nationally comparable. Schools conducted activities in many different ways depending heavily on circumstances and resources. As Dismore (2009) shows, despite the positive feedback on some schemes, the qualities of a mentor or advisor would make a difference upon the delivery. According to Haggis and Pouget (2002) students place an importance on relationships and support, specifically those from "non-participant" families. The level of support and the quality of students' relationship with people involved in the activities such as mentors, career advisors or people running work

placements could affect the outcome. Since there was no single strategy nor a standards training for those running the schemes, young people could have got away with dissimilar experiences; this makes the impact of the work-related learning not only incomparable but hard to implement. LSYPE certainly does not provide any data to measure the quality of programs young people attended which creates speculations over the amount of value it added to young people understanding of the world outside school. Dismore (2009) reports that, most students might feel unconfident enough about issues such as subject choice and progression route; these activities are their chances to have a sense of direction and challenge their choices and learn more about HE, however, what they take away depends on the quality of their experience. In a literature review by the ARC Network (2013) into widening participation to higher education, they emphasised on the role of coherent, structured and sustained interventions. This argument raise an issue regarding the quality of interventions provided by different types of schools. In the literature review mentioned above, they found a concern over the number and quality of IAG (information, Advice and Guidance) to under-represented groups. The state schools, which hold a larger proportion of kids from deprived backgrounds comparing to grammar schools and independent ones, presumably have limited resources and lower access to high quality schemes. They also found that the most effective form of IAG for less privileged individuals appear to be personalised, integrated into other support and address priority information required regarding HE finance, applications, selection processes and employment opportunities. The review additionally found evidence that it is challenging to make sure influencers working with young people are well-informed about HE and other progression routes and it is very critical to create a clear strategy when working with students and evaluating schemes (HEFCE 2013). All the points made here reflects how the quality of the work/HE-related learning activities matter in terms of raising aspiration and impacting young people. However, the entire evaluation could be subjective to the type of school LSYPE cohort members attended and the type of intervention organised for them.

8 THE DATA AND ITS LIMITATION

As explained prior to this chapter, in the absence of a better and more comprehensive dataset, LSYPE is selected to test the hypothesis formed in this research. The questions asked at age 16 from students are limited. For instance, in terms of measuring the impact of career talks, LYSPE focused only on the Connexion services, which was a popular choice by schools but was not the only way students could receive advice about their future including pathways to university and higher education attendance. In fact, they failed to capture one of the most important policy matters in this survey while they had the opportunity. Putting that aside, the only option to evaluate the effect of career talks on young

people transition to early adulthood is to use the variable which presents the data of whether young people talked to Connexion advisors. This for sure introduces some complications in interpreting the results and evaluating the impacts but it is the best option available.

Additionally during 2004-10 there was a policy focus on work-related learning enforcing young people to have experienced at least couple of activities before graduating at school (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) 2004)), and the percentage of young people completed work experience was only approximately 38%. This could indicate a sample representativeness issue, which consequently affects the result of the work placement analysis. In the case of mentoring, as explained before, the technical report has not specified the type and nature of the activity itself, which could misguide the conclusions made base on the estimation models above.

Last but not least, applying control variables is a way of including factors that could affect the dependent variable. In this research there is a wide range of theory and literature-led elements included in the estimation models to modify the impact of work-related learning based on places young people come from or their personal attributes. However, this is not the most complete image of what is happening in reality, this is just one image. There might be many other factors that changes pupils' decision to attend university which are either not captured by the dataset or the estimation models built in this research which is called unpredictable or residuals. This can have a large influence on the coefficients and the correlations could be change if for instance, a different set of control variables is introduced to the model. The Leading People (2016) report by Sutton Trust, mentioned in the discussion, explains in detail how young people graduated from private schools dominate the labour market. According to their research, recruiters increasingly value 'costly extracurricular accomplishments and high quality internships', which are excessively available to young people from more advantaged backgrounds. The data regarding school type young people attended is gathered, however the categorisation of the data is limited and the inclusion of the variable in the model would decrease the sample size by large. This could undermine the role of institutions type in the coefficients but doubtfully the entire validity of the estimation models.

To sum up, the work-related activities didn't seem to work, using the evaluation method above and the LSYPE dataset, in terms of raising participation level of young people or their education expectation level, however, there are plenty of reasons that could played a role in shaping student's decision-making process, some explained above.

In the next chapter, the similar models are built using British Cohort Study 1970 in order to investigate the hypothesis formed earlier on in the previous generation and under a different policy focus. The result of the next analysis then will be compared with LSYPE data, which represents a more modern

society in a different economic environment and education system. This allows an inter-generational comparison of how school interventions affected young people view of HE and their education expectations. Moreover it helps this research to understand if the type of young people attending work-related schemes has changed at all. Although the widening participation agenda and HE policy was different on the then Conservative government, this examination could provide some validation or rejection to the research question devised here.

Chapter 6: Analysis II- BCS1970

1 Investigation of the British Cohort Study 1970

The use of BCS data helps to generate a clearer image of the possible impact of activities discussed in the last chapter on likelihood of young people attending or planning to attend university. There are three issues we need to attend to: 1) whether individuals who attended these type of activities possess similar characteristics 2) the intergenerational comparison of the level of impact and 3) was the status of work-related learning programs seen differently under a different government and policy focus. The result of the analysis could help either validate the findings of the previous chapter or not. However, we need to be mindful of the different circumstance in late 70s to the period of LSYPE.

At first some descriptive statistics about the key variable of interest is shown in addition to the background variables applied in building the model.

2 Descriptive statistics

Contrary to LSYPE where the latest sweep is at age 19/20 and young people record whether they are in university or applied and waiting for the result, in BCS the data about university attendance is gathered at age 26 when young people are most probably are finished with university (Cohort 1986). At age 26 cohort members are asked about the highest qualification they achieved and the answer options include none, CSE, O level, A Level, NVQ4 and degree. Those who selected degree are coded as 1 and are our interest group and the rest of the qualifications are coded into one category as 0.

Table 6-1 Percentage across different level of qualifications

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Lower than degree	6,663	79.3
	Degree	1,736	20.7
	Total	8,399	100.0
Missing			
	System	5,075	
Total		13,474	

The total number who responded to this question is 8,399 from which 20.7 percent hold a degree (comparing to 51.5 percent of LSYPE, despite the similar response rate). Those who haven't applied and chose a different route to adulthood are the comparison group in the following analysis. So in the first glance, the number of people who chose to go to university was much lower in early 80s.

They were also asked at age 16 about their experience at school with regard to work-related learning and their understanding of the world of work. BCS measures this through three variables, two of them in common with LSYPE including work experience and career talk with people from outside school. The one activity that is not measured in LSYPE is workplace visits instead of which mentoring was addressed. Table 6-2 summarises the frequencies.

During the 1980s notably, funding made available to schools through the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) provided considerable government investment which led to very many schools introducing changes to broaden the curriculum to make it more relevant to the working world. Essentially a "work-oriented and employment-based development" aimed at broadening the curriculum to help young people develop skills and qualifications more relevant to the labour market (McCulloch 1991). While the TVEI initiative cannot alone be said to have been responsible for the delivery of careers focused engagement activities in schools, it clearly did provide a significant impetus and it is timely that the British Cohort Study surveyed young people aged 16 midway through the life of the TVEI initiative. The BCS survey gives a snapshot of teenage school experiences at a time when considerable interest (and resource) was focused on improving young people's relationships with the world outside school.

Approximately 84 percent of the students attended career talks with outside speakers. Similar to LSYPE, only 38.2 percent of the BCS did work experience, although there was a dissimilar policy environment between 2004 and late 70s/early 80s.

Table 6-2 Summary of activities attended at age 16

	Yes	No	Total number of respondents
Work placement	33.2%	66.8%	6,313
Workplace visit	31%	69%	5,934
Career talks	84.4%	15.6	4,199

Visiting workplaces was moderately welcomed by young people and schools; only 31 percent of the respondents attended this activity.

These variables are the key of the estimation model with which the direct relationship of attending work/HE-related learning programs at school and university attendance could be investigated. However to study the role of social factors it is essential to profile the cohort members in terms of their socio-economic factors and demographics and then compare it to the LSYPE pupils. This research attempted to apply the same set of social factors used in the previous chapter but BCS questionnaire measures some variables differently or does not comprise of LSYPE variables for which different proxies are used. Table 6-3 represents the summary of the set of background variables that were explained in depth in the previous chapter.

The majority of the cohort members' fathers come from relatively higher social classes but still a representative number of them belonged to the manual working class (37 percent). The sample also has approximately equal number of female and male, 49 and 51 percent respectively. In term of the sample ethnic origin, cohort members were mainly born to UK parents or they have at least one parent from the UK. Maths scores are used as a control for school performance; there is strong evidence showing there is a statistically significant correlation between math ability and later academic success (Aughinbaugh 2012; Parker et al 2013; Schoon et al 2010). Students in this sample mainly achieved above score C in their exam; this variable is used to separate those who are academically more able and are more likely to attend university base on their own decision and interest (agency factor) regardless of school interventions. The frequency table also illustrates that from 15,455 responded to the question the majority of the parents were not very involved in their child's education (75.7%).

Table 6-3 Summary of background variables

			%
	Father social class (N=4,751)	I	7.9
		II	29.4
		III Non manual	10.1
		III manual	37.6
		IV	8
		V	2.1
		Student	1.7
		Dead	3.2
	Tenure (N=5,790)	Owned	79.6
		Privately rented	2.2
		Council	18.2
	Gender (N=9,003)	Female	49
		Male	51
	Ethnicity (N=7,327)	At least one UK parent	96.5
		Mixed	3.5
	Human Drawing test result (7,392)	Average (Standard deviation)	-0.11 (1.27)
	Mother interest in child education (N=4,149)	Very interested	90
		Uninterested/very little interested	10
	Math score at age 16 (N=3,986)	O level a	12.5
		O level b	16.6
		O level c/CSE 1	22.7
		O level d/CSE 2	14.7
		O level e/CSE 3	16.2
		CSE 4	12
		CSE 5	4.9
		Fail	0.4
	No. of days watched TV after 6pm (N= 7,299)	Min	0
		Max	5
		Mean	1.2

	No. of times read book to weekly (N=7,123)	Min	0
		Max	7
		Mean	4.5
	HE aspiration at age 16 (N=5,555)	Choose a career requiring a degree	20.1
		Choosing a career that needs other qualification	79.9
	Mother's Interest in child education (N=4,149)	Interested	90
		Uninterested	10

Before finding out the background of young people who attended the engagement activities while at school, it is interesting to show whether the correlation between school performance and aspiration and university participation in addition to the role of parental social class on both. This analysis is implemented for LSYPE data and will give an opportunity to compare it with BCS generation to the possible extent.

Table 6-4: Cross-tabulation of school performance and HE attendance

N= 3,896 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-square test		Highest qualification achieved	
Math Score at age 16		Lower than degree	Degree
	O level A	5%	30.1%
	O level B	11%	30.1%
	O LEVEL C/ CSE 1	20.9%	27.4%
	O level D/ CSE 2	18.3%	6.5%
	O level E/ CSE 3	21%	4.1%
	CSE 4	16.5%	1.4%
	CSE 5	6.7%	0.3%
	Fail	0.1%	0.1%

Table 6-4 shows, similar to LSYPE results but with a different measurement, young people with a degree as the highest qualification achieved at age 26 have done well at school (see the first two grade categories in maths score). This means it is highly likely for young people with better school achievement to attend university later on. The relationship is highly statistically significant. The

analysis, to a certain extent, is in line with what found in LSYPE analysis given the assumptions and measurements in BCS.

To understand the role of parental social class in school performance, table 6-5 is presenting the correlation between these two variables. Here, father's social class is cross-tabbed with school performance. The results illustrates that young people who belong to the higher social classes are more likely to perform well at school and the relationship is statistically significant at 5%. For instance, looking at the top two math grades (O level A and B) the proportion of students who are from the top two classes are much higher comparing to the bottom two social classes. Despite different measurements used in BCS the conclusion is similar to LSYPE analysis.

Table 6-5: Cross-tabulation of school performance and father's social class

N= 3,753 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-square test	Father's social class (excluding dead or student)					
Math Score at age 16	I	II	III Non manual	III manual	IV	V
O level A	27.8%	17.7%	10.1%	7.0%	6.5%	1.5%
O level B	24.6%	20.9%	19.0%	11.8%	10.1%	9.2%
O LEVEL C/ CSE 1	27.8%	24.7%	24.9%	20.4%	20.3%	16.9%
O level D/ CSE 2	10.5%	12.7%	13.8%	17.4%	18.5%	10.8%
O level E/ CSE 3	14.0%	21.4%	17.4%	26.2%	7.0%	14.9%
CSE 4	2.5%	7.5%	13.8%	15.0%	19.6%	27.7%
CSE 5	1.4%	3.2%	4.4%	6.1%	7.2%	6.2%
Fail	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%	1.5%

This approach is repeated below to explore the role of aspiration on university attendance and secondly the influence of parental social class on the level of aspiration using the measurements extracted from BCS. The result of the cross-tabulation between HE attendance and aspiration (as defined previously in the methodology chapter) is presented in table 6-7. Young people with an aspiration for careers requiring a degree (who are categorised as having a higher HE aspiration) are in fact more likely to hold a degree at age 26; this correlation is highly statistically significant. It is also interesting to repeat the approach in LSYPE to find out the percentage of highly able working class students who apply for university later on. Table 6-6 shows the result of this analysis for BCS data.

Table 6-6: Proportion of highly able students from the lower social class (III manual, IV, V) applying for university

N= 1,588 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-square test		Highest qualification achieved	
Math Score at age 16		Lower than degree	Degree
	O level A	2.7%	26.7%
	O level B	8.3%	28.6%
	O LEVEL C/ CSE 1	19.5%	25.6%

The result shows that the majority of the highly able students from lower social classes would choose to go to university later on. This verifies the findings of LSYPE and is in line with the data presented by Goldthorpe and Jackson (2008).

Table 6-7: Cross-tabulation of HE aspiration and university attendance

N= 4,361 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-square test		Highest qualification achieved	
HE aspiration measurement		Lower than degree	Degree
	Choose a career requiring a degree	9.9%	56.1%
	Choosing a career that needs other qualification	90.1%	43.9%

To demonstrate that social class has an impact on aspiration as well as school performance (as investigated in LSYPE analysis), the father's social class variable is cross-tabbed with aspiration and the result is shown in table 6-8.

Table 6-8: Cross-tabulation of HE aspiration and father's social class

N= 3,528 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-square test	Father's social class (excluding dead or student)					
HE aspiration measurement	I	II	III Non manual	III manual	IV	V
Choose a career requiring a degree	48.1%	30.6%	20.3%	14.4%	16.8%	8.5%
Choosing a career that needs other qualification	51.9%	69.4%	79.7%	85.6%	83.2%	91.5%

The pattern in table 6-8 shows that there is a negative relationship between HE aspiration and social class; those who are from higher social classes are aspired to careers which need a degree and this research assumes this would potentially affect their decision to pursue higher education. This correlation is statistically significant at 5%. The finding in this section is in line with the findings of LSYPE. The major role of social class is evidenced through a series of cross-tabulation between university attendance, aspiration, school performance and parental social class.

The next section outlines the characteristics of young people who attended engagement activities while at school.

3 WHO ATTENDED WORK-RELATED LEARNING PROGRAMS?

In this section, similar to the analysis of LSYPE, social factors are cross-tabbed with the attendance of work/HE-related learning programs to better understand the correlations later on in the analysis. This examination focuses only on father social class, performance at school at age 16 and education aspiration at age 16 as main indicators of social factors and agency.

3.1 WORK EXPERIENCE

Before reporting the result of the cross-tabulation there are some assumptions made in this section needs to be explained. From this point onward two categories of father's social class are excluded

from the examination: student and dead. Secondly, to conduct a reasonable comparison across math performance those who did O-level above C are categorised as more academically able; however this categorization is for this section only and in the main analysis an ordinary format of this variable is used.

Looking at Table 6-9 young people from working classes are more likely to participate in work experience. In the top two social classes pupils are less likely to have been part of any placement. This correlation is statistically significant at 5%. Middle class parents are more able to improve their progression of their children through their own networks (Perry and Francis 2011).

Young people who are academically more able are also less likely to have participated in work experience. The correlation between the two variables is statistically significant at 5%. Last but not least, education aspiration at age 16 is correlated with attendance in work experience and the result shows young people with lower aspiration are more likely to partake work experience than their peers with higher aspiration about education after year 11.

Similar to the result of LSYPE, a conclusion could be drawn from the cross-tabulation in table 6-4 that work experience was mostly common among students who had lower achievement at schools and are coming from more disadvantaged families. Even though students in the BCS cohort attended school under a different policy environment and a different economic environment, when compared to the LSYPE study it appears that the status of work-related learning was to some extent similar to a generation after. To recall, father's social class is used to explore the impact of social class. Also maths score at age 16 is applied as a measurement of school performance and here for the ease of interpretation young people are divided to high performers (those who achieved O level A-C in Maths) and low performers if obtained grades other than that. Last but not least HE aspiration (described in the methodology chapter) is used to show whether young people attending engagement activities are generally aspired to pursue higher education or not.

Table 6-9: Cross-tabulation of work experience and selected background factors

		Work experience	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
Father social class (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	I	26.3	73.7
	II	29	71
	III Non manual	34.4	65.6
	III manual	35.5	64.5
	IV	39.1	60.9
	V	42.3	57.7
Higher performance age 16 (O level a-c) (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Yes	25.1	74.9
	No	40.2	59.8
HE aspiration age 16 (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Choose a career requiring a degree	25	75
	Choosing a career that needs other qualification	35.3	64.7

3.2 CAREER TALKS WITH OUTSIDE SPEAKERS

Similar to work experience, talking to a career advisor from outside school is correlated with selected background factors. The result is presented in Table 6-10.

Table 6-10 Cross-tabulation of career talks and selected background factors

		Career talk	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
Main Parent social class (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	I	78.6	21.4
	II	82.7	17.3
	III Non manual	81.3	18.8
	III manual	87.1	12.9
	IV	87	13
	V	86.4	13.6
Higher performance age 16 (O level a-c) (P-value:0.02 using Chi-square statistics)	Yes	83.5	16.5
	No	86.6	13.4

	HE aspiration age 16 (P-value:0.37 using Chi-square statistics)	Choose a career requiring a degree	82.3	17.7
		Choosing a career that needs other qualification	85.1	14.9

From parental social class point of view, the percentage of students who attended the talks increases as the social class moves downward and this relationship is statistically significant at 5%. Very similar to the work experience case, career talks appear to be very common among students who received free school meal, achieved lower scores in GCSEs and had lower education aspiration at age 13. These correlations are all statistically significant except education aspiration at age 16. The cross-tabulation proved that education aspiration is not a good predictor of attending career talks.

3.3 WORKPLACE VISITS

Young people were asked at age 16 whether they have visited any workplaces with their school. The correlation between workplace visit and background factors is shown in table 6-11.

Table 6-11 Cross-tabulation of mentoring and selected background factors

			Workplace visits	
			Yes (%)	No (%)
	Main Parent social class (P-value:0.02 using Chi-square statistics)	I	24.4	75.6
		II	26.8	73.2
		III Non manual	34.5	65.5
		III manual	30.9	69.1
		IV	34.4	65.6
		V	24.6	75.4
	Higher performance age 16 (O level a-c) (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Yes	26.1	73.9
		No	33.5	66.5
	HE aspiration age 16 (P-value:0.00 using Chi-square statistics)	Choose a career requiring a degree	26.4	73.6
		Choosing a career that needs other qualification	32.3	67.7

The relationship between workplace visit and the background variables presented above follows the same pattern as the other two activities; it is also statistically significant (at 5%).

From a policy perspective in the late 70's and early 80's, it seems that there was less of an agency involved in undertaking these activities. If schools designed these programs to help a group of students with low aspiration and lower grades, they were exposing only certain types of pupils to these activities. When most of the participant are coming from more or less similar cultural and social expectations, couldn't the intervention be undermined, even if it is a high quality experience? Norris and Francis (2014) for instance found that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds do not feel comfortable nor confident in using cultural and social capital to further their goals. So if there is a significant number of these students attend an activity the potential impact could be different comparing to the situation where there is a diverse range of pupils involved.

In the next section the impact of these activities on progression to HE is evaluated in the BCS generation. The result of the analysis is then used to draw a comparison between the LSYPE findings and the following ones.

4 IMPACT OF INTERVENTIONS ON UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION

4.1 WORK EXPERIENCE

At first the direct relationship between the two variables is studied (Model 1), with no control variables in place. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 6-12. As explained before, the measurement of the outcome variable is slightly different in BCS. The variable is generated base on the question young people answered at age 26 about the highest qualification they achieved. The sample size throughout all the following analysis is much smaller comparing to LSYPE. However it is still large enough to be representative.

Table 6-12 Logistic Regression between work experience and HE attendance

Model 1 N= 4,313 PPC: 73.4%		B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
	Work placement	-.509	.078	1	.000	.60	0.40
	Constant	-.862	.041	1	.000	.42	0.58

Model 1 shows young people who completed work placement during school are 40% less likely to have achieved a degree by age 26. This correlation is highly statistically significant. However, model 1 shows merely the raw relationship with no control variables included which is not as solid as when they are inserted into the model; they could predict certain impacts on the likelihood of attending university The set of defined control variables described in methodology chapter are in Model 2, and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 6-13.

Table 6-13 Logistic Regression with control variables in place

Model 2 N=1,167 PPC: 79.3%		B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
	Work experience	-.267	.171	1	.119	.76	0.24
	Ethnicity	-.270	.745	1	.717	.76	0.24
	Gender	-.031	.159	1	.846	.97	0.03
	Father social class	-.162	.058	1	.006	.85	0.15
	Mother interest in child education	2.131	1.100	1	.053	8.42	…
	Cognitive ability at age 5 (Human Drawing Test)	.018	.071	1	.806	1.01	0.01
	Math score at age 16	-.678	.063	1	.000	.50	0.50
	No of days watched TV after 6pm	-.111	.046	1	.015	.89	0.11
	No of days read to in week	.082	.035	1	.020	1.08	0.08
	HE aspiration at 16	1.760	.168	1	.000	5.81	…
	Tenure (Own a house)	1.135	.477	1	.017	3.11	…
	Constant	-1.676	1.430	1	.241	.18	0.82

In Model 2 the significance level in estimating the likelihood of HE progression in the case of work experience attendance is changed. The fitness of the model is also improved which indicates that the control variables increased the goodness of the model; this figure is changed from 73 to approximately 80 percent. The relationship between work experience and HE attendance is not statistically significant anymore; this means introducing the control variables played a crucial role in clarifying the association of the two variables. It appears that there are far more factors that could potentially impact the decision to attend university than just participating in work experience and these factors cannot be ignored as they mostly have significant effect on the likelihood of going to university. For

instance, the odds of going to university decrease for when the parental social class lowers and the relationship is highly significant at 5%. Among other background factors, school performance and education aspiration are also determinant in the likelihood of HE attendance. The odds of having high aspiration and attending university is 5.81 times higher than the odds of having lower aspiration; this relationship is statistically significant at 5%.

4.2 CAREER TALK WITH OUTSIDE SPEAKERS

In this section the impact of career talk on likelihood of attending university is investigated. At first it is evidenced what is the direct link between two variables and the result of this analysis is presented in Table 6-14 as Model 3.

Table 6-14 Logistic Regression between career talk and HE attendance

Model 3 N= 4,043 PPC: 73%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Career Talk	-.200	.095	1	.035	.819	0.19
Constant	-.824	.086	1	.000	.439	0.57

Similar to work experience, the result of the logistic regression shows career talk with an outside speaker does not increase the likelihood of young people's HE participation. Those who took part in this activity are 19 percent less likely to pursue tertiary education and the correlation is statistically significant at 5%.

Subsequently, Model 4 investigates the same relationship with control variables in place for more robust results. Table 6-15 presents the result of this analysis. The background factors used in this model is similar to Model 2.1.

Table 6-15 Logistic Regression with control variables in place

Model 4 N=1,102 PPC: 78.9%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Career talk	-.001	.224	1	.996	.99	0.01
Ethnicity	-.150	.818	1	.854	.86	0.14
Gender	-.017	.162	1	.916	.98	0.02
Father social class	-.145	.060	1	.016	.86	0.14
Cognitive ability at age 5 (Human Drawing Test)	.032	.072	1	.658	1.03	0.03
Math score at age 16	-.667	.064	1	.000	.51	0.49
No of days watched TV after 6pm	-.114	.047	1	.014	.89	0.11
No of days read to in week	.076	.036	1	.035	1.07	0.07
HE aspiration at 16	1.709	.171	1	.000	5.52	…
Tenure (Own a house)	1.117	.475	1	.019	3.05	…
Mother's interest in child education	2.122	1.098	1	.053	8.34	…
Constant	-1.870	1.469	1	.203	.15	0.85

After including the background variables the significant link between career talk and the decision to attend university disappears. Individuals' background once again proved to be very important and this can be observed in the percentage of corrected estimation, which increased from 73% to 79%. Model 4 shows that majority of the control variables applied have very strong impact on young people's decision to go to university. The odds of going to university decrease for when the parental social class lowers and the relationship is highly significant at 5%. Young people with higher academic ability at age 16 are certainly more likely to hold a degree at age 26 i.e. the odds of achieving higher math score at age 16 and pursuing higher education later on is 0.51 times higher than the odds of achieving lower grades and going to university; this relationship is highly statistically significant. Education aspiration at age 16 has also proved to be a very solid predictor of HE participation, students with higher HE aspiration are 5.52 times more likely to participate in higher education and the relationship is statistically significant at 5%.

4.3 WORKPLACE VISITS

The direct relationship of the young people's visit to workplaces and the odds ratio of them holding a degree at age 26 is presented in Table 6-16 as Model 5. Although it is mentioned previously that the nature of this activity is to some extent ambiguous, the relationship is tested in here to find an evidence of effectiveness.

Table 6-16 Logistic Regression between workplace visit and HE attendance

Model 5 N= 4,083 PPC: 73%		B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
	Workplace visit	-.358	.080	1	.000	.69	0.31
	Constant	-.878	.041	1	.000	.41	0.59

Model 5, similar to other two activities, illustrates that those whose school arranged for a visit to workplaces are less likely to going to have attended university and the correlation is statistically significant at 5%. Young people who attended visits are 31% less likely to pursue higher education comparing to their peers who didn't. This is a very strong link, however, it could change after including the control variables. Table 6-17, Model 6 shows the result of the logistic regression between workplace visits and HE attendance after plugging the background factors.

Table 6-17 Logistic Regression with control variables in place

Model 6 N=1,120 PPC: 78.8%		B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
	Workplace visit	-.284	.178	1	.110	.75	0.25
	Ethnicity	-.206	.760	1	.786	.81	0.19
	Gender	.045	.162	1	.779	1.04	0.04
	Father social class	-.156	.059	1	.008	.85	0.15
	Cognitive ability at age 5 (Human Drawing Test)	.016	.072	1	.818	1.01	0.01
	Math score at age 16	-.661	.063	1	.000	.51	0.49
	No of days watched TV after 6pm	-.103	.046	1	.026	.90	0.10
	No of days read to in week	.074	.036	1	.038	1.07	0.07
	HE aspiration at 16	1.812	.171	1	.000	6.12	…
	Tenure (Own a house)	1.093	.484	1	.024	2.98	…
	Mother's interest in child education	2.194	1.103	1	.047	8.97	…
	Constant	-1.808	1.441	1	.209	.16	0.84

The significant relationship between the two variables disappears after including the controls. Model 6 revealed important background factors again. Parental social class, education aspiration at age 16, academic performance at age 16 and home learning environment all have direct and strong relationship on university attendance.

It is observed throughout the analysis that the engagement activities did not affect the university participation as much as it was expected with or without controlling for background factors. As discussed in the analysis of LSYPE, there is another outcome this research would like to explore: education expectation at age 16. Young people education expectation could be correlated with education outcomes at age 26. BCS allows the measurement of education expectation by asking young people at age 16 what their intentions after age 16 are (similar to LSYPE measurement). Those who chose to stay in full time education are coded as 1 and those who decide to leave full time education are coded as 0. It is explained in detail previously that why this variable could be predictive of higher

education participation. The impact of the engagement programs on education expectation is going to be evaluated in the following section with and without control variables in place.

5 IMPACT OF INTERVENTIONS ON EDUCATION EXPECTATION AT AGE 16

At first, this section explores whether there is a correlation between students' education expectation at age 16 and university attendance. Table 6-18 presents students perception of their future education pathway.

Table 6-18 Young people's education expectation at age 16

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Staying in full time education	3,605	64.9
	Leaving full time education	1950	35.1
	Total	5,555	100.0

From those who responded almost 65 percent expect to continue full time education after age 16 versus 34.5 percent who don't see themselves participating post-16 education. Table 6-19 explores the relationship between education expectation at age 16 and the likelihood of holding a degree at age 26.

Table 6-19 Cross-tabulation of HE attendance and education expectation at age 16

N=3,839 P-value: 0.00 using Chi-square test		Stay in full time education	Leave full time education	Total number of respondents
	Qualification lower than degree	57.5%	42.5%	1194
	Holding a degree	2.9%	97.1%	911

As shown in Table 6-15 those who said they are not likely to attend university at age 16 experience more chances of not holding a degree at age 26. Those who expected to be in education after 1 are more likely to actually attend HE later on. This relationship is highly statistically significant at 5%. This shows that education expectation is surely an important factor that could potentially predict the likelihood of one deciding to attend tertiary education; in line with the findings of LSYPE. In order to

find out whether parental social class plays a role in determining young people education expectation at age 16 these two variables are cross-tabbed in table 6-20.

Table 6-20 Cross-tabulation of education expectation and father's social class

N= 3,110 P-value= 0.00 using Chi-square test		Father's social class (excluding dead or student)					
Education expectation at age 16		I	II	III Non manual	III manual	IV	V
	Stay in full time education	90.5%	81.6%	68.5%	56.1%	54.2%	46.0%
	Leave full time education	9.5%	18.4%	31.5%	43.9%	45.8%	54.0%

The result of cross-tabulation between social class and education expectation shows that the majority of the young people from the top three social classes stay in full time education; this relationship is highly statistically significant which makes parental social class a strong factor in estimating education expectation.

The next section is going to investigate whether work-related learning activities could change young people's education expectation hence their willingness to attend or apply for university.

5.1 WORK EXPERIENCE

In here the hypothesis that work experience could have positive effect on education expectation is tested in two steps: direct relationship and with control variables in place.

Model 1.1 is the result of the logistic regression between the two variables on interest with no background variables included in the estimation.

Table 6-21 Logistic Regression between education expectation and work experience

Model 1.1 N=5,518, PPC: 65%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Work experience	-.451	.059	1	.000	.63	0.37
Constant	.775	.035	1	.000	2.17	…

The above analysis shows similar result to the regression between work experience and HE attendance and also to the findings of LSYPE, considering the differences in the measurements used across two cohort studies. Those who completed placements are approximately 37 percent less likely to expect to pursue education after 18. This relationship is statistically significant at 5%. After controlling for the same set of background variables applied in the previous section, the relationship is not statistically significant anymore which intensifies the role of some social factors in determining the education expectation.

Table 6-22 Logistic Regression with controls in place

Model 1.2 N=1,075 PPC: 80.2%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Work experience	-.222	.176	1	.205	.80	0.20
Ethnicity	-1.282	1.167	1	.272	.27	0.73
Gender	-.589	.174	1	.001	.55	0.45
Father social class	-.128	.062	1	.041	.88	0.12
Cognitive ability at age 5 (Human Drawing Test)	-.091	.077	1	.234	.91	0.09
Math score at age 16	-.308	.053	1	.000	.73	0.27
No of days watched TV after 6pm	-.101	.044	1	.020	.90	0.10
No of days read to in week	.083	.034	1	.015	1.08	0.08
Tenure (Own a house)	.627	.299	1	.036	1.87	0.87
Mother's interest in child education	.665	.409	1	.104	1.94	0.94
HE aspiration at age 16	1.909	.317	1	.000	6.74	…
Constant	2.593	1.315	1	.049	13.36	…

Although some of the social factors included in the model are not significantly associated with the outcome variable, they are included in the model for consistency. Among strong background factors are aspiration at age 16, school performance, home learning environment, father social class and gender. These variables are highly predictive of student's expectation to stay in full time education, hence higher chances of pursuing higher education. For instance, the odds of expecting to stay in full time education after age 16 decrease when father's social class lowers and the relationship is statistically significant at 5%; which was also shown earlier through cross-tabulation of father's social class and education expectation. Parental social class did not play a role in young people's education expectation in the LSYPE generation which could partly be explained by the generally higher education expectation in the recent years comparing to 1986. In addition, HE aspiration proved to be strongly associated to education expectation; the odds of having a higher aspiration for a career which requires a degree and staying in full time education after the age of 16 is 6.74 times higher than not having a high aspiration.

5.2 CAREER TALK WITH OUTSIDE SPEAKERS

Career talk with advisors and its impact on education expectation is explored in this section and the result of the regression model between two variables without control variables is shown in Table 6-23 as Model 2.1.

Table 6-23 Logistic regression between education expectation and career talk

Model 2.1 N= 3,712 PPC: 67.8%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Career Talk	-.123	.099	1	.214	.88	0.12
Constant	.849	.091	1	.000	2.33	…

This estimation model shows that career talk with an outside speaker has no impact on education expectation, as the relationship is not statistically significant. The model is reproduced with controls below.

Table 6-24 Logistic Regression with controls in place

Model 2.2 N=1,020 PPC: 80.3%		B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
	Career talk	.347	.247	1	.161	1.41	0.41
	Ethnicity	-1.263	1.152	1	.273	.28	0.72
	Gender	-.482	.178	1	.007	.61	0.39
	Father social class	-.149	.064	1	.021	.86	0.14
	Cognitive ability at age 5 (Human Drawing Test)	-.068	.078	1	.386	.93	0.07
	Math score at age 16	-.290	.054	1	.000	.74	0.26
	No of days watched TV after 6pm	-.101	.045	1	.024	.90	0.10
	No of days read to in week	.099	.035	1	.005	1.10	0.10
	Tenure (Own a house)	.609	.307	1	.047	1.83	0.83
	Mother's interest in child education	.679	.409	1	.096	1.97	0.97
	HE aspiration at age 16	1.939	.331	1	.000	6.95	…
	Constant	2.090	1.310	1	.111	8.08	…

The relationship between career talk with outside speaker and education expectation remains statistically insignificant after controlling for background factors. However most of the background factors stay significant and predictive in the estimation model. This repeated pattern of the impact of socio-economic factors on the outcome demonstrates the importance of structural factors in determining young people's destination after school. Variables such as father's social class, home learning environment, house ownership, mother's interest in child education and demographics to are important elements in a young person's life which doesn't involve choice and they are very influential in their experience at school and the life after school.

5.3 WORKPLACE VISITS

Last but not least the relationship between workplace visit and education expectation is tested below. At first the direct effect is measured and presented in Table 6-25 as Model 3.1.

Table 6-25 Logistic Regression between education expectation and workplace visit

Model 3.1 N= 5,204 PPC:65.3%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Workplace visit	-.402	.062	1	.000	.66	0.34
Constant	.762	.036	1	.000	2.14	…

This program did not help students' education expectation, according to the findings above. Those who have visited workplaces with schools are 34 percent less likely to expect to pursue education after the age of 16. This relationship is highly statistically significant.

Table 6-26 Logistic Regression with controls in place

Model 3.2 N=1,043 PPC: 74.6%	B	S.E.	df	Sig.	Changes in odds	Odds ratio
Workplace visit	-.206	.185	1	.265	.81	0.19
Ethnicity	-.670	1.178	1	.570	.51	0.49
Gender	-.636	.178	1	.000	.52	0.48
Father social class	-.127	.063	1	.044	.88	0.12
Cognitive ability at age 5 (Human Drawing Test)	-.094	.078	1	.228	.91	0.09
Math score at age 16	-.320	.055	1	.000	.72	0.28
No of days watched TV after 6pm	-.100	.045	1	.025	.90	0.10
No of days read to in week	.075	.035	1	.035	1.07	0.07
Tenure (Own a house)	.590	.310	1	.057	1.80	0.80
Mother's interest in child education	.659	.426	1	.122	1.93	0.93
HE aspiration at age 16	1.869	.319	1	.000	6.48	…
Constant	2.128	1.324	1	.108	8.40	…

After controlling for social factors, Model 3.2 confirms the effect of workplace visit; the relationship is not statistically significant. Although some control factors such as ethnicity, cognitive ability at age 5 and mother's interest in child education in this particular model did not have impact on education expectation, school performance, HE aspiration, father's social class, home ownership and elements of the home learning environment considerably affect the outcome variable. The odds of expecting to stay in full time education after age 16 decreases when father's social class lowers and the relationship is statistically significant at 5%. Furthermore, the odds of having higher HE aspiration i.e. aspiration for a career which requires a degree is almost 6.48 times more than those who have lower level of aspiration, hence higher chances of holding a degree later on.

6 DISCUSSION

The evidence provided by analysing the British Cohort Data is not different from the previous findings. The result of the regression does not support the hypothesis in this chapter i.e. work-related learning programs at school, as proxies of widening access schemes, increases the chances of young people attending university. This hypothesis wasn't accepted using both datasets, which measures the outcome under two different education and economic environment. Young people who attended work experience, career talks and workplace visits are less likely to pursue higher education. There was a combination of the effect size which was directionally negative in terms of affecting their decision to attain a degree. Cohort members with the experience of work-related learning activities were also of similar background characters; they came from less advantages families, achieved lower grades at school and grew up in less traditional environments; this is drawn from the series of cross-tabulation of the background factors and engagement activities attendance. These variables played a crucial role in predicting young people's decision to attend HE and their education expectation i.e. staying in full time education after the age of 16.

The findings of BCS analysis confirm the results of the LSYPE. The type of students attending the school-mediated programs are similar across the two generations i.e. individuals from less affluent backgrounds and lower attainment with less aspiration to follow the traditional routes into labour market. Furthermore, in both late 70's and 2010, exposure to the world outside the classroom did not determine students' choice to pursue tertiary education; those who attended the above schemes are less likely to end up in university later on in life. The two generations went to school under two different education systems one designed by the Conservative party and followed with no major changes under the Labour government from 1974 (when the BCS members were 14); and one

designed and led by the Labour government. However, both systems had a way of paying attention to work-related learning. The Employment and Training Act and the Education (Work Experience) Act in 1973 shed light on the importance of young people exposure to pathways after school. In a related form, the Labour party encouraged the schools to make sure young people have better understanding of routes into future by focusing on community engagements and emplyers/HE institutions collaborations (such as AimHigher and Connexion) (DCSF 2007). Assuming these actions were taken to affect young people's access to social capital, in particular those coming from non-traditional backgrounds or helping them to make the right decisions having useful information about their future and raising their aspiration, none of the policies worked favourably. More interestingly, both generations graduated from school in a similar economic context; both the 1976 recession and the 2008 financial crisis led to pressure on public spending. The cuts resulted in higher unemployment rates and worsening public services including education. Although the number of university entrants are higher the socio-economic gap across the entrants still existed.

In the research report, *Understanding the impact of recession on labour market behavior in Britain* (2012), Bryan and his colleagues found that the attitudes to schooling and performance at school among children with less educated parents are more negative comparing to students coming from more educated families. In addition, among 11-15 year-olds those with less educated parents, unemployment rates reduces education aspiration, in terms of willingness to stay in education and going to university. Unfortunately the measurement of aspiration is not similar in LSYPE and BCS, therefore not accurately comparable; but at a glance the number of young people who said they are aspired to apply for university in LSYPE is 3 times higher than those whose aspiration for a career which requires a degree in BCS generation. Aside from this, in the analysis above, it was shown that education aspiration does strongly predict university attendance; if both aspiration and attainment level among students from more non-traditional backgrounds is negatively affected by economic crisis and its repercussions, it appears expectations of closing the socio-economic gap in HE participation is far from being attainable.

It is now clearer, from this research perspective, young people with lower aspirations who come from lower social classes and deprived areas should be engaged in widening access schemes; however the process of doing so, up to now, is quite questionable and new ways of addressing the issue need to be developed.

It appears from the result of the analysis and as mentioned in the previous chapter, that societal factors play a much larger role in young people's pathways to future than agency. It is fair to believe that individual agency affects their destination after school but one cannot ignore the structural

factors, cogently argued by Bourdieu (1997) (as discussed in the theory chapter). Even if it is assumed that the agency factor is eliminated through school mediation to arrange work-related learning programs (as a proxy of widening access schemes), students from lower SES do not feel comfortable using social capital to achieve their goals (Norris and Francis 2014). This is an example of how individuals' culture and norms can play in what they take away from different opportunities. Norris and Francis (2014) also found in their studies that pupils from lower SES felt less confident about their capabilities to fit into the HE and 'elite' progression routes (also see Archer et al. 2007). These attributions certainly cannot be easily tackled and perhaps exposing them to the possibilities after school through the activities discussed here couldn't overcome the heavy weight of cultural capital. Since the majority of kids attending these programs are from lower social classes, it shouldn't be too surprising as why they are less likely to pursue tertiary education.

From a different perspective, young people rely heavily on their family and friends, directly or indirectly, for guidance and direction (Tough and Brooks 2007) if they don't have access to well-educated and informed networks, one would expect that access to them provided within school have positive effects on kids with lower SES since it creates opportunities for young people who wouldn't otherwise have access to. However, if schools target only students with lower academic abilities and similar cultural and social backgrounds, would the program's impact be equal to when there is a combination of students across different SES? This could potentially be an example of social reproduction inside a classroom; when pupils from similar backgrounds are gathered under the "disadvantaged" label it is possible that they stick to the attitudes and mindset they already possess. Secondly, it is argued by Hatcher and La Gallais (2008) that good work experience placements for instance are allocated mostly to private and grammar schools. If that is the case and experiences are distributed in socially differentiating ways where low quality opportunities are provided for students from lower SES in state schools with limited resources, the result of one intervention couldn't in fact undo the effect of social factors and change young people's attitude about their fitness to HE. It is stated in the report by Sutton Trust, Leading People (2016), that highly able pupils from working classes achieve lower GCSE grades, on average, than other highly able pupils, with substantial impact on access to both higher education and high-status careers. Both LSYPE and BCS analysis leads into a similar conclusion; young people from lower social classes who perform well at school are more likely to attend university later on. To tackle this, the government should develop an 'effective national programme for highly able state school pupils, with ring-fenced funding to support evidence based activities and tracking of pupils' progress.' (Kirby 2016).

Looking at the issue of quality across schools, it is important to recall the point made in the last chapter concerning the unstandardized and unintegrated schemes. Schools conducted activities in many

different ways depending heavily on circumstances and resources. Therefore, the quality of the work-relate learning programs and the effect become minimal if not implemented so well. For instance, in the work of Kahsefpakdel and Percy (2016) students who found their career talk with outside speakers very helpful earn more than their peers who attended the talks and it wasn't helpful at all. This shows student perception of the interventions does matter. Also they found those who found the career talks very helpful attended larger number of this activity, and then assumed it is through repetition that one could access useful and relevant information and networks; this then translates to mechanism through which they make more informed decisions and become better placed in the labour market. With programs not being unified and national across schools, it is difficult to measure what type of impact each and everyone of them had on young people's transition from school including their attitudes and perceptions of their HE.

In summary, both datasets failed to support the hypothesis that work-related learning activities ran during school days have positive impact on young people's decision to attend university or plans to pursue higher education. It is evident now that the societal factors overweight the individual agency in predicting student's aspiration and choice to apply for post-compulsory education. Although the significance level varied across the activities discussed above, the outcome was directionally similar. While evaluating the impact of the widening access program types, the importance of social and cultural backgrounds were highlighted. The role of family social class and the environment young people grew up in are determinant in young people's destination after school.

7 BCS1970 DATA LIMITATION

The result of this analysis is valid for the sub sample selected by this research. With a different set of controls in place the result of impact size and the significance level could alter. This follows the point made in the previous chapter about the complexity of the issues being captured by the data. . There are, certainly, many other factors that influence young people's attitude and aspiration formation which might have not been included in the estimation models built above. The sensitivity test to socio-economic factors has been implemented in a small scale in this work, however, exploring all possible scenarios and variables potentially effective in showing student's perception and diction-making process is a complete separate work. One of the major caveats of the BCS data is the school type variable. While this research is able to make inferences about agency and structure it is not able to do it for the type of institutions. The role of institutions is very important because some schools may be more effective than others in terms of these implementing engagement activities and resources they

have to design a top experience for their students. The Leading People (2016) report by Sutton Trust, mentioned in the discussion, explains in detail how young people graduated from private schools dominate the labour market. According to their research, recruiters increasingly value 'costly extracurricular accomplishments and high quality internships', which are excessively available to young people from more advantaged backgrounds. The data regarding school type young people attended is gathered from teachers in 1986 when there was a large strike and a limited number of teachers responded to the questionnaire. This would affect the sample size included in the analysis. In addition, uncertainty about the randomness of teachers' responses could bias the result of the study.

A data weakness mentioned by Sheperd (2006) in profiling the British Cohort Study regards the ethnic diversity of the cohort members. This study used the ethnicity variable as a weight in the analysis after the results of the first round of the models built to test if the results are sensitive to this factor. No evidence was found that ethnic diversity played a considerable role. However, this points out a problem that there could be other factors among missing people in every sweep which affects the representativeness of the data and this research did not manage to address them. This issue was resolved by LSYPE survey designers where weights between sweeps were offered.

Even though all the results showed no impact of raising attendance level across different social classes by promoting widening access-type activities, the discussion provided above and with bearing the data limitation in mind, it is not explicit that governments shouldn't pay close attention to funding schemes of similar standards and quality across schools which provides first-hand experiences of life after school and routes into higher education and provide access to networks and people acting as essential social capital; in particular for students who wouldn't otherwise had the opportunity.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

1 KEY FINDINGS

In this section, the key results of the analysis are presented. The past two chapters were dedicated to testing the hypothesis at the center of this research. This is that engagement activities and school interventions (as proxies of widening participation activities) affect young people's intention and decisions to attend university. In the light of this analysis, it appears that the interventions investigated have little positive effect. Young people who participated in these types of activities are, in fact, less likely to attend university or expect to pursue higher education later.

The estimation models built in the analysis chapter using LSYPE data, show that interventions, , which are largely representative of types of engagement activities during school within widening participation programmes, do not affect young people's views about tertiary education. These interventions include work experience, career talks with advisors and mentoring. The investigation includes a series of cross-tabulation between background factors and activity attendance which highlights that students who attended such programmes do not belong to the group of young people coming from advantaged backgrounds. They are mostly from working class families in receipt of free school meals and performing less well at exams, including Math and English. The result of the estimations using LSYPE data shows, after controlling for socio-economic variables, that there is no significant association between work experience attendance and either university participation, or young people's expectation to stay in full time education. The latter is highly predictive of HE participation. Similar results are found for career talks with advisors and mentoring.

These socio-economic factors not only are observed in profiling students attending these programmes, but they are very important in predicting young people's decisions whether to attend university. The analysis of LSYPE shows that parental social class plays a crucial role in the likelihood of students pursuing higher education, with those coming from the lower classes less likely to consider higher education. This trend is observed throughout all the analysis conducted when investigating the impact of engagement activities.

A similar pattern emerged when looking at the importance of school performance. Students who achieved 5 or more GCSE A*-C including Maths and English are highly likely to attend university.

In addition, in line with the emphasis in literature on the role of aspiration, pupils who showed higher level of HE aspiration at age 13 are more likely to participate higher education. These explanatory variables are all significantly associated with university attendance confirming what has been argued in the past literature. The prominent role of parental social class is also investigated in levels of aspiration and school performance. Young people from lower social classes tend to perform more weakly in school. Over 58 percent of young people who achieved 5 or more GCSE A*-C including Maths and English belong to the top three parental social classes. Also, over 55 percent of students aspiring to pursue higher education at age 13 come from the highest social classes, according to analysis of LSYPE. Despite the findings of the impact of social class, the data shows young people from the bottom three social classes (representing disadvantaged families) who perform well at school are still likely to go to university. Indeed, 72 percent of highly able students from the lowest social classes apply for higher education according to the LSYPE data.

The analysis conducted with the LSYPE dataset is repeated to interrogate the BCS70 data. The nature of school engagement activities with which the BCS70 cohort of young people were involved throughout the survey is open to interpretations as they didn't provide clear definitions for each activity. However, similar assumptions are made in both datasets, and when required. This is less of a problem in LSYPE since they specified the type of activity they measured (i.e. career talk with the Connexions advisor; mentoring outside classroom by non-teaching staff). Although the nature of the data found in LSYPE and British Cohort Study 1970 are slightly different, and hence not entirely comparable, the outcome of the analysis is similar. This may tell us that either the interventions need to be improved, or there has not been an inter-generational change in the effect of structural factors on HE participation.

Through the cross-tabulation of background factors (i.e. parental social class, school performance and HE aspiration) and school engagement activity participation, similar trends to LSYPE data emerge. This analysis highlights that students who attended such programmes come from less privileged families. These students also have a lower level of aspiration for higher education and achieve lower grades at school. After controlling for these factors as well as other socio-economic variables highlighted by the past literature, the estimation models built using logistic regression analysis did not show, on average, significant, meaningful correlation between participation in engagement activities and likelihood of university attendance. None of the three activities studied, i.e. work experience, career talks with people from outside school or workplace visits, proved to have impact in increasing the likelihood of young people going to university. The BCS70 analysis reflects the findings of the LSYPE with respect to the effect of socio-economic factors on predicting the likelihood of young people attending university. For instance, parental social class plays a crucial role in the likelihood of students pursuing higher

education, with those coming from the lower classes less likely to consider higher education. Analysis of the importance of school performance shows students who achieved higher grades in Maths are highly likely to attend university. In addition, with regard to role of aspiration, pupils who showed higher level of HE aspiration at age 16 are more likely to participate higher education later on. All of the associations between these variables and university attendance are significant.

Literature detailed in the policy and theory chapters reports that widening participation programmes have positive impact on both attainment and aspiration of disadvantaged young people (Morris and Rut 2006).However, this research found no meaningful association between the two variables of interest. Reasons for these findings are further investigated and discussed below in two main interpretations. Firstly, that poor implementation of the engagement activities studied in this research may have contributed to a lack of increase in university participation. Secondly, that there are significant structural factors involved in young people's decision-making which preclude meaningful interventions. Furthermore, previously discussed data limitations and evaluation methods selected throughout chapters 5 and 6owing to the absence of better datasets may have affected results and conclusions. This is explained in the following section.

2 INTERPRETATION

As discussed in Chapter 3, governments over the past decade have attempted to increase the number of students registering at university and close the long-standing social class gap in attendance rates. There was a difference in approach to achieve these goals between the previous New Labour and Conservative-led Coalition governments. The Coalition government assumed that promotion and emphasis of the greater returns of staying in full-time education to achieve a degree would result in a larger proportion of young people, particular from under-represented groups, aspiring to university and achieving the necessary higher school grades. They presented university as a desirable option that would benefit both individuals and society. The Coalition government had less concern over the uneven distribution of social and cultural capital across different social backgrounds. This has been shown to have high influence on young people's choices both in this study and published literature. This policy put undue emphasis on individual choice and assumptions that young people have greater control of their lives, given the limitless opportunities they encounter. Also, it neglects factors such as social and cultural capital and their impact on young people's decision-making process. Analysis implemented in this research, and past literature (for example Chowdry et al. 2013), highlights the

major role structural factors play in young people's view of higher education. This is particularly true for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Assuming reliance on the opportunities available to young people in the modern world and holding them responsible entirely for their decisions is not reasonable based on the results of the estimation models generated in Chapter 5 and 6. For instance, according to the analysis using LSYPE data, pupils from lower social classes are less likely to consider university after age 16 and are more likely to leave full-time education after the age of 16. Individualisation of the under-representation issue is seriously flawed since it draws attention away from the structural factors that affect certain groups in society. Secondly, it ignores the deficiencies in the education system that perpetuate the class gap. Thirdly, it disregards channels through which policies could partly overcome the lack of access to social and cultural capital. Treating low aspiration and low attainment as an individual deficit seems erroneous, in light of different data analyses, this stance potentially jeopardising what schools and universities could implement to confront this issue. If government relies on the premise of young people's responsibility to outweigh the limitation of no or low access to social and cultural capital, it lacks the appreciation of reasons why students leave education before entering HE.

The Coalition government's policy to devolve responsibility of widening participation to schools and higher education institutions allowed universities to decide how to reach out to students, particularly to pupils from working classes. This was discussed previously in the policy chapter. One possible consequence of this is that the poorer institutions with fewer resources could become poorer. According to the regulations devised by the Coalition, universities could only charge higher fees if they meet the Office for Fair Access minimum requirement for the recruitment of students from lower social classes, as explained in detail in Chapter 3. Thus, universities with fewer resources to spend on widening access schemes may be precluded from charging higher fees and, hence, their revenue would be affected.

Another problem of overselling the idea of university attendance is addressed in research into perceived returns on holding a degree when economists believe this no longer offers traditional benefits (Brown et al. 2011). Britton, Dearden, Sheperd and Vignoles (2016) have recently published research about the variation of graduates' earning by gender, institution they attend, subject they study and other socio-economic backgrounds. In this, they show that graduates are still earning more than non-graduates but the scale of wage is a function of factors including parental income, their institutions, and their subject. With the high amount of debt and lower employment prospects that young graduates now confront, in particular for those coming from lower social classes and attending

less prestigious institutions, new forms of support and guidance are required to better navigate young people through the system.

Furthermore, despite recognised dangers of narrowing the policies on attainment improvement at school (Kerr and West 2010), it does appear that the Coalition government did just that in primarily promoting the importance of GCSE results. Current policies are to continue emphasis on making improvement through school autonomy, competition and choice that was pioneered by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government (Whitty and Andres 2014). Attainment is acknowledged to be only one element through which higher education participation could be potentially addressed. Hence, there are other interacting factors which the government are not taking into account. In any case, the analysis of LSYPE and BCS70 in Chapters 5 and 6 showed that school performance is also affected by parental social class.

In contrast, New Labour seemed to identify the importance of wider structural and cultural factors in its broader policies and had a better understanding of the structural limitations of choice. They invested more in channels through which they hoped to overcome the significant barriers of structural factors relating to social class. The White Paper, 'The Future of Higher Education', published by New Labour in 2003 highlighted the importance of higher education (HE) in creating prosperity and that wide access to HE makes for a more 'enlightened and socially just society'. The White Paper recognises that widening access cannot be accomplished easily and believes that it depends on building 'aspirations and attainment' throughout all stages of education. However, they have a slightly different perspective on aspiration compared to the Coalition. Aspiration for them has deep roots in social background and requires various forms of intervention to be shaped or changed. These could involve outreach programmes at schools to increase the information available to pupils in order, in part, to influence their aspirations. Other aspects could be further resources to improve education at schools, and additional resources at earlier ages which could affect both aspiration and attainment (Barr, 2003). Lupton et al.'s (2015) research finds that government should encourage community engagement and informal learning. Community education can provide a 'stepping stone to formal education, growing knowledge, building confidence and motivation, reducing social isolation and strengthening community capacity to support voluntary activity and children's learning'. New Labour particularly addressed this point by facilitating different initiatives (addressed earlier in this thesis) and did not cut central government spending on policies designed to compensate for the lack of cultural and social capital access among pupil coming from disadvantaged families.

Years of research into widening access has shown how social class and background factors impact on attitudes towards HE and the value students place on attending university. The findings help to make

sense as to why pupils make different choices in light of their cultural capital and social class, i.e. the way people see themselves. Research by Archer et al. (2003) discusses that students from lower social classes characterise HE by risk. It is unfamiliar for those whose parents didn't go to university and making safe choices is key for these young people. Cultural and social capital are therefore significant concepts in understanding what resources individuals have access to that enable them to make decisions about their future (Thornton et al 2014). Access to knowledge about the changing HE environment and relationships with professionals and networks outside school are crucial; young people from disadvantaged families need this in order to facilitate their choices. Recalling the work of Menzies (2013), the type of activities aimed to help young people realise their abilities and help them to achieve their aspiration through informed decisions are, in fact, fundamental in determining the quality of young people's transition to HE.

The argument above backs up the conclusion that New Labour failed to successfully implement widening access programmes. This may be one of the reasons why the theoretical link between HE participation and school engagement activities didn't prove significant. The assumptions behind the activities were quite realistic but it is another thing to deliver them effectively to hit the target. It seems that although that government attempted to show awareness of the impact of structural factors on aspiration and attainment, their schemes were designed in a context which was less constructive. Archer (2006) criticises New Labour for failing to engage satisfactorily with wider social structures. For example, considering the origin of aspiration as fabricated through disadvantage rather than as personality discrepancies may be one cause of unsuccessful engagement (Leathwood and O'Connell 2003).

Developing this topic, in the analysis completed in this thesis, the characteristics of those attending work-related learning programmes (as proxies of widening participation activities) are profiled. The LSYPE and BCS70 data show that they mainly come from less advantaged families with lower academic achievement. The idea of separating aspirations from what young people grow up with and, in turn, their perception of institutional education and HE appears to be unjustifiable from the point of view of this research. Dismore (2009) finds a tension between students' perceptions of their competencies and of those required in the world of HE. Let us assume that students in these programmes come from lower social classes, and already have less aspiration and expectations of survival in university compared with their peers. These are powerful social forces and it might require a considerable intervention to offer sufficient new information and confidence to change assumptions and expectations (DCSF 2008). Hence, the ability of work-related learning activities to achieve their aim of changing these students' minds about university participation could be minimal. In summary, it is a combination of factors that could affect young people's perceptions of their ability to succeed in HE.

Attending a single programme whose attendees are mainly from similar backgrounds couldn't possibly have a considerable influence on how they choose their educational pathway. This is a dispositional barrier to widening access rooted in young people's habitus.

Another delivery failure in the design of the widening participation intervention was related to the lack of uniformity amongst the programmes. These were not nationally comparable and schools conducted activities in many different ways depending greatly on circumstances and resources. As Dismore (2009) shows, despite the positive feedback on some schemes, the quality of a mentor or advisor made a difference to delivery. According to Haggis and Pouget (2002), students place an importance on relationships and support, specifically those from 'non-participant' families. The level of support and the quality of students' relationships with people involved in these activities, such as mentors, career advisors or people running work placements, could affect the outcome. Since there was no single strategy nor standards training for those running the schemes, young people may well have had dissimilar experiences. This makes the work-related learning not only hard to implement, but also having incomparable impact. LSYPE certainly does not provide any data to measure the quality of programmes young people attended, which creates speculations over the amount of value it added to young people's understanding of the world outside school. However the article by Kashefpakdel and Percy (2016) used BCS70 that shows a significant impact of perceived helpfulness of career talks on future wage premium. This emphasises the importance of the quality of the engagement activities. Dismore (2009) reports that many students on these activities might feel unconfident about issues such as subject choice and progression route. As a result, although these activities offer chances to develop a sense of direction, challenge their choices and learn more about HE, what they take away depends on the quality of their experience. In a literature review by the ARC Network (2013) into widening participation to higher education, they emphasised the importance of coherent, structured and sustained interventions. The quality of interventions provided by different types of schools is raised as an issue. In the ARC review, they found concerns over the number and quality of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) interventions for under-represented groups. State schools, which serve a larger proportion of young people from deprived backgrounds than grammar and independent schools, are assumed to have limited resources and lower access to high quality schemes. The review also found that the most effective form of IAG for less privileged individuals appeared to be personalised and integrated into other support. It addressed priority information required regarding HE finance, applications, selection processes and employment opportunities. The review additionally identified challenges in ensuring influencers working with young people are well-informed about HE and other progression routes, and that it is critical to create a clear strategy when working with students and evaluating schemes (HEFCE 2013). All the points made here point to the influence of the

quality of the work/HE-related learning activities on raising aspiration and impact on young people. However, the entire evaluation could be subjective to the type of school LSYPE cohort members attended and the type of intervention organised for them.

In addition to the issues discussed above, there is the problem of the timing of interventions. The socio-economic difference in university attendance does not occur at the point of entry to HE. In other words, the social class gap in HE participation does not emerge simply because lower SES pupils face a choice at age 18 where they choose not to go to university. Instead, it appears largely due to lower SES pupils not achieving as highly in secondary education as their more privileged peers. This is in line with the general trend in the literature that socio-economic gaps emerge fairly early in individuals' lives (Chowdry et al. 2013). Therefore, focusing policy on encouraging disadvantaged pupils at age 18 to attend university is unlikely to have a major influence on reducing the social class gap in university participation, especially through participation of the lowest SES pupils . In their research into barriers to widening participation, Chowdry and his colleagues (2013) show that, even with controlling for attainment at age 16, targeting lower SES pupils with good GCSE results is unlikely to substantially increase their HE participation. In any case, compared with interventions to improve achievement at age 11 years, or earlier in primary school, this approach is relatively late.

This concept of critical age for receiving accurate information about HE and life on campus has two implications for this research. Firstly,, as mentioned in Chapter 5, evaluation of widening participation programmes from young people's viewpoint, found that older students receive more information and attend more activities than younger pupils. LSYPE asks this question at age 16 Hence, 16-year-old students, surveyed in the LSYPE, have access to a wider range of experiences and information about the future educational and career pathways. However, at this age, students are busy preparing for GSCE exams, the grades for which are central to HE offers and admissions and are valued highly by the education system. Also, it is too late to re-think their education path, select GSCE subjects more relevant to their chosen degree or dramatically influence their grades. These issues question whether intervention at earlier ages may widen HE participation.

Secondly, Gorard and Smith (2007) approached this subject using a life-course analysis revealing that the pattern of social and economic gap is already prevalent among those with pre-university qualifications. This pattern is, in turn, based on variant staying-on rates in schools and colleges. The majority of young people who stay in education after the age of 16 do so in order to try and attend HE. These staying-on rates are, in turn, heavily based on level 2 qualifications.

Therefore, to understand these patterns, researchers have to take a life-course view of participation. For instance, where people are brought up serves to structure their social expectations; those who

have lived in the most disadvantaged areas are less likely to participate in 'lifelong learning'. This might be due to the respective access to social capital of those in different areas, or differences in actual local opportunities (Gorard and Smith 2007). These findings re-iterate that focusing on interventions at age 16-18 is not going to eradicate the class gap in university participation. Rather a life-course analysis approach is required with complementary schemes designed to address these issues.

One can conclude that neither the Coalition nor the New Labour approaches were sufficient to make an influence. However, New Labour's policies were more comprehensive in their scope and relevance.

The reasons outlined above could partly justify the findings of this research and explain why, against expectations, the programmes did not significantly affect educational aspirations or actual HE participation profile. However, there are further points related to the general inefficiency of widening participation initiatives that are discussed in the following section.

3 THE BIGGER PICTURE

Despite New Labour's initiatives to narrow the socio-economic gap in higher education, there are other explanations as to why past widening participation programmes could not simply address this long-lasting issue.

Some see the nature of the youth labour market as a barrier to widening participation. Firstly, some economists believe that over-education in the UK, coupled with rapid expansion and government mass-marketisation of HE, created an excess supply of graduates in the labour market. Consequently, this depressed rates of returns to HE (Adnet and Slack 2007). The recommended modification mechanism to this excess supply is that, as a 'wider spectrum of the ability range is brought into HE, employers place graduates into jobs which were previously filled by non-graduates and hence yield lower levels of productivity and income than traditional graduate jobs' (Elias and Purcell, 2004a). Walker and Zhu (2003) and Elias and Purcell (2003) suggested that the returns of holding a university degree had remained rather constant over time. Subsequently, Elias and Purcell (2004b) have reassessed their earlier results and, together with Chevalier et al. (2004), conclude that returns have actually plummeted for recent graduates. This argument aligns with recent debates regarding graduates' under-employment (see d'Aguiar and Harrison 2015). If this disproportionately affects certain groups who are already under-represented in HE, it would create a barrier to widening participation.

It is also argued by Brown, Lauder and Ashton (2011) that the assumptions behind the transformation in the relationship between education and social justice and the emergence of the concept of knowledge or 'magnet' economy, i.e. where the economic successes in general terms depends on how significantly and efficiently people invest in themselves, are questionable. In their book, they state that the UK government's understanding of the working of international business is very limited. They do not recognise how multi-national companies are revising their human resource strategies, leading to the likelihood of a larger percentage of high-skilled jobs being created in relatively low-waged economies. They go on to say that the focus of policy discourse in the early twenty-first century is based on a view of human capital that assumes a 'tightening bond between education, jobs and rewards, with a rising wage dividend for those who invest in higher education'. Brown and Lauder (2006) debate that the basic beliefs concerning human capital, i.e. that investments in education lead to wage premium, —is not a general rule of economic growth but a 'transitional case'. Hence, there are no promises that the outcome of the education system will meet the expectations of students, families or governments. They also shed light on the technological advancements in the global economy, which change the nature of jobs and skills required. There is no formula that one can follow which results in secured, high status and paying work. Lastly, they argue that over-emphasis on employability skills and improving educational standards disregards increasing 'positional conflict' in access to education and competitive jobs. As the over-supply of graduates forces many young people to enter unfulfilling jobs unrelated to their field of expertise, the rivalry for privileged jobs increases. In turn employers face the issue of selection between a pool of highly qualified applicants and how to validate their selection strategies (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). It has also led people from higher social classes to find new forms of social capital to give them a competitive advantage. Therefore, the problem of 'equality of opportunity' has become far more important than before from this research perspective.

Firstly, the argument above is, again, an example of how social advantage could provide better opportunities when there is an intense competition for jobs after graduation from university. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, it relates to the alarming issue of overeducating and underemployment, especially in particular subject areas. In the light of these, if young people from lower social classes are informed about the labour market settings, would they choose to pursue higher education, particularly considering the prospect of accumulated debt after graduation? It is then crucial that widening access programmes address these issues and inform young people of appropriate pathways to adulthood instead of merely promoting university attendance. The point mentioned earlier regarding the quality of engagement activities is pertinent here.

In the global knowledge-based economy, the UK government is confronted with three challenging and conflicting objectives for their higher education policies: expanding participation; widening participation; and re-direction of higher education funding to students and their families. Their accomplishment in resolving this policy 'trilemma' will have important implications in maintaining international competitiveness and the promotion of social justice (Adnett and Tlupova 2008) This has proved to be extremely challenging during the past few years, as illustrated by youth unemployment and under-employment figures.

Given the arguments above the promises made to young people before entering HE depends on numerous factors which could act as impediments to widening participations along with other structural limitations. However, governments could use tools such as collaborations between universities and schools to help young people make more informed choices. At a time where most of the HE costs are passed onto students and their families, a lot more is at stake. Therefore, it is optimal to expose young people to the reality outside of the school system. Widening participation programmes should be redesigned perhaps to address the issue of youth labour market, graduate employment and competitions for high status jobs. They should cover, as well, whether university is for everyone and what benefits one can get selecting alternative routes into labour market. The quality and usefulness of the widening access activities remain vital.

4 THE EVALUATION AND DATA

Gorard and Smith (2006) argue that the appropriateness of the research conducted to evaluate impact of widening participation is flawed. Problems related to methodologies and datasets used could, in fact, bring into question the result of these analyses. For instance, they believe the drop out in cohort studies is not random which introduces bias to the hypothesis tests and, hence, researchers should acknowledge this caveat. In the analysis of LSYPE in Chapter 5 this has been the case. However, the weights produced by the administrators of this cohort data compensate for this issue to a certain extent. This has not been the case in the British Cohort Study.

A further common problem is missing responses. Not all the questions are compulsory in large-scale datasets, which means complete data are not available for all cases. The number of missing cases in an analysis using different variables could significantly bias presented results. A data weakness mentioned by Sheperd (2006) in profiling the British Cohort Study relates to ethnic diversity of the cohort members. This study used the ethnicity variable as a weight in the analysis after the results of

the first round of the models built to test if results are sensitive to this factor. No evidence was found that ethnic diversity played a considerable role. However, this highlights the problem that there could be other factors among missing people in every sweep which could affect the representativeness of the data and this research did not manage to address them. LSYPE survey designers resolved this issue by using weights between sweeps. Despite how the analysis in this research tackled the missing response problem, researchers generally apply imputation, the process of replacing missing data with substituted values. However, since imputation needs additional assumptions and could potentially cause bias, there are cases it should not be used (Mittag 2013).

The quality of the dataset used in any research and the timeframe is of high importance in generating solid results especially when evaluating government policies. In the absence of a better and more comprehensive dataset, LSYPE was selected to test the hypothesis formed in this research. The questions asked of students at age 16 are very limited. For instance, in terms of measuring the impact of career talks, LYSPE focused only on those delivered by the Connexions services, which was a popular choice by schools. However, this was not the only way students could receive advice about their future, including pathways to university and higher education attendance. In fact, questioning failed to capture one of the most important policy factors, i.e. work-related learning opportunities at schools. Putting that aside, the only option to evaluate the effect of career talks on young people's transitions to early adulthood is to use the variable which presents data of whether young people talked to a Connexions advisors. This certainly introduces complications in interpreting results and evaluating impacts, but it is the best option available.

Last but not least, applying control variables is a way of including factors that could affect the dependent variables. In this research, there is a wide range of theory-, and literature-led elements included in the estimation models to modify the impact of work-related learning in light of places young people come from or their personal attributes. However, this is not the most complete image of what is happening in reality; this is just one perspective. There might be many other factors that change pupils' decisions to attend university which are either not captured by the dataset or the estimation models built in this research. These are called unpredictable or residuals. They can have a large influence on the coefficients, and the correlations could be different if, for instance, a different set of control variables is introduced to the model. As far as the correctness of the models concerns, percentages are not too far from 100 percent, but this could be potentially improved if there were more comprehensive and effectual explanatories added to the model.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

It is apparent from the Conservative-led Coalition government's policies that they strongly believed in the tightening bond between education and economics benefits. Their focus on endorsing the idea that higher investment in education leads to higher status and rewarding jobs implied they had planned to increase university attendance regardless of individuals' backgrounds, structural factors and the global economic environment. However, this research attempted to assess the feasibility of this approach using a literature search, and with the help of quantitative analysis of existing data.

It has been stated that the results in this piece of work showed no increase in HE attendance for working class students through promotion of widening access-type activities after controlling for social factors. Nonetheless, from the discussion outlined above, and bearing in mind the data limitations, it is not clear-cut that governments should disregard the funding of high quality school schemes that provide first-hand experiences of life after school and routes into higher education. These should provide access to networks and people acting as essential social capital, in particular for students who wouldn't otherwise have had this opportunity. The ever-changing education system and funding arrangements for students; the inequalities of opportunities across different classes of society; and the uneven distribution of social and cultural capital necessitate a support mechanism to help young people navigate the pathways in front of them. This mechanism needs to be nationwide, accessible across different types of schools and of the same quality and standards. The resulting ability to regularly and consistently evaluate programmes will eventually help the governments to track their impact and success and to improve schemes according to informed needs. Also, governments can conduct research about the volume and timing of interventions required to overcome social factor barriers, and what are the optimal number and quality of schemes.

It is too soon to judge the impact of the Coalition government's policies and there are no appropriate data to assess the long-term employment outcomes. However, the investigation around New Labour policy, which emphasised the combination of human, social and cultural capital, appeared have a more beneficial impact on the social mobility agenda for pupils from less advantaged backgrounds. New Labor seemed to better understand the necessary bases for mechanisms to improve young people's aspirations, and expectations. In the same way, this thinking addressed attainment, considered the most predictive factors of university participation, and they were able to design some solutions to partly compensate for limitations of social forces.

In conclusion, this research finds the structural factors substantially important in determination of young people's destinations after school. It also suggests that there is a combination of agency and

structure that could have a large impact on young people's view of higher education. As a consequence, governments should not narrow their policy focus on either of these two very influential factors. Throughout the interpretation of the data analysis, this research identifies the importance of widening participation activities but that they should be implemented within an appropriate age group, consistently and efficiently. Confirming the recommendation of the recent Sutton Trust report, *Leading People* (2016), widening participation schemes need to do more than just improving academic attainment; they also need to provide knowledge and experience of possible careers for under-represented group of young people so that they can begin to overcome the social reproduction of the education system.

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